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The King as a Writer: The Image of Anglo-Saxon Rulers in the Perspective of Contemporary Artists and Society

Panovník v roli autora: Obraz anglosaského krále očima soudobých umělců a společnosti

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze, dne 11.ledna 2015 .....……....…

Aneta Kantorová

Poděkování

Tímto bych ráda poděkovala vedoucí diplomové práce Mgr. Lence Panuškové, Ph.D. nejen za její odborné vedení, ale i za ochotu, vstřícnost a trpělivost. Poděkování rovněž patří mé rodině a přátelům, především za jejich neochvějnou podporu a toleranci.

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce je zaměřena na význam psaného slova coby prostředek vládnutí anglosaských panovníků. Pro tento účel bylo vybráno období ohraničené příchodem římských misionářů roku 597 a normandským vyloděním v roce 1066, jelikož tato událost již předznamenává nový směr vývoje anglosaských zemí s výrazným vlivem tehdejší francouzské společnosti. Přístup králů k psanému slovu je analyzován na základě dochovaných literárních a ikonografických důkazů, z nichž značnou část tvoří dokumenty sepsané či objednané samotnými králi, zbývající část je zastoupena vizuálním zobrazením panovníků v dochovaných rukopisech.

První kapitola popisuje historické pozadí, jež je nezbytné pro správný výklad zkoumaných textů a portrétů. Její obsah je zaměřen na hlavní koncepty této práce, tj. podstata literární aktivity v rámci středověku, vývoj chápání královského majestátu a postup šíření křesťanství v anglosaských zemích. Druhá kapitola se zabývá analýzou písemných dokumentů a specializuje se na texty sepsané v období vzdělávací a náboženské reformy krále Alfréda. Podrobný rozbor staroanglických překladů dokazuje, že Alfréd používal texty jako didaktické prostředky, sloužící především k podpoře náboženství a vzdělávání. Klíčové spisy této kapitoly představují *Pastýřská péče* sepsaná sv. Řehořem, *Rozhovory duše s Bohem* od sv. Augustina, a Boethiusova *Útěcha z filosofie*. Širší kontext, obohacen o detaily z Alfrédova života, je zajištěn dílem Bedy Ctihodného *Církevní dějiny národa Anglů* a Alfrédovou biografií *Život krále Alfréda* sepsanou Asserem. Třetí kapitola pokračuje ve zkoumání postoje anglosaských panovníků k psanému slovu a své teze staví na analýze královských rukopisů a v nich zachovaných portrétů. Tato pasáž zahrnuje období od 10. do 11. století a zaměřuje se na krále Athelstana, Edgara, Knuta Velikého, a také na královnu Emmu. Dokumenty o pozdějších panovnících jsou důkazem posunu chápání textu coby prostředku vládnutí, a to, na rozdíl od doby krále Alfréda, k praktičtějšímu a více sebestřednému využití.

Klíčová slova

Královský majestát, lingvistická analýza, staroanglické texty, středověké rukopisy, anglosaská ikonografie, *Pastýřská péče*, *Rozhovory duše s Bohem*, *Útěcha z filosofie*, *Církevní dějiny národa Anglů*, *Život krále Alfréda*, král Alfréd, král Athelstan, král Edgar, Knut Veliký, Emma Normandská

Abstract

The present thesis focuses on the importance of the written word as a ruling device of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Due to the availability of historical evidence, the studied period begins in 597 with the arrival of Christian missionaries from Rome and ends prior to the Norman Conquest in 1066. The kings' approach to the written word is analyzed on the basis of surviving literary and iconographic evidence, i.e. on documents composed for or by the rulers, and on the visual images of the rulers as portrayed in surviving manuscripts.

The first chapter provides a historical background necessary for the correct interpretation of the examined texts and portraits. This section is aimed at the main concepts discussed in the thesis: medieval authorship, medieval kingship, and the spread of Christianity within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The second chapter offers the analysis of written documents and focuses on the texts composed within the scope of King Alfred's educational and religious reform. The close reading of the OE translations demonstrates the king's use of the texts as didactic tools mainly serving to promote religion and learning within the kingdom. The key texts are Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*; an additional context of the king's life and priorities is provided by Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Asser's *Life of King Alfred*. The third chapter explores the subsequent kings' attitude to the written word through a close analysis of their portraits and the manuscripts in which they are located. This section is concerned with the period from the 10th to the 11th century and focuses on King Æthelstan, King Edgar, King Cnut, and also Queen Emma. These rulers illustrate the later development of the written word used as a ruling device and their portraits document the arrival of more practical and self-centred uses of texts.

Key words

medieval kingship, medieval authorship, a linguistic analysis, Old English, Anglo-Saxon iconography, Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, Christianity, monastic reform, *Pastoral Care*, *Soliloquies*, *Consolation of Philosophy*, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, *Life of King Alfred*, Asser, Bede, King Alfred, King Edgar, King Æthelstan, King Cnut, Queen Emma, Queen Ælfgifu

List of symbols and abbreviations

>	developed into
<	developed from
c. (in dates)	circa
fig.	figure
fol.	folio
EH	Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
EHD	*English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock
ME	Middle English
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
MS	manuscript
OE	Old English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary (online)
PDE	Present-Day English

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Nu bit ┐ for Godes naman he halsað ælcne þara þe þas boc rædan lyste þæt he for hine gebidde, ┐ him ne wite gif he hit rihtlicor ongite þonne he mihte; forþamþe ælc mon sceal be his andgites mæðe ┐ be his æmettan sprecan þæt he sprecð ┐ don þæt þæt he deþ.[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

The diploma thesis *The King as a Writer: The Image of Anglo-Saxon Rulers in the Perspective of Contemporary Artists and Society* examines the attitute of Anglo-Saxon kings to the written word as a ruling device, which is to be illustrated on the analysis of a selection of ruler portraits and several surviving texts issued by the kings. The studied period covers almost five centuries; it starts with the arrival of St Augustine to the kingdom of Kent in 597 and ends with the circumstances accompanying the death of King Cnut in the 11th century.

The combination of the wide scope of the topic and the limited space of the MA thesis forced me to draw lines somewhere and regrettably to exclude a number of rulers, documents, and pieces of visual art. The textual analysis is thus focused merely on King Alfred who represents an ideal prototype of a king-writer whose literary endeavours and educational reformation caused a widespread vernacular literacy and the spread of books composed in English. The third chapter, which is focused on visual arts, is aimed at rulers of the 10th and 11th centuries whose portraits are embedded within surviving manuscripts. The selected rulers are King Æthelstan, King Edgar, King Cnut, and also Queen Emma who represent another stage of the royal use of the written word and reflect the development of the Anglo-Saxon concept of kingship and the society as such.

In order to provide some sense of continuity, the thesis is introduced by a theoretical and historical background which follows the development of the concepts of kingship and authorship as applied in the Anglo-Saxon environment. As the arrival of Christianity in the late 6th century represents a starting point for the content of this study, another subchapter of the theoretical section is dedicated to the transition from paganism to Christianity and provides a brief survey of the early rulers' reactions to the new religion. William A. Chaney's thorough study, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, examines the common folk's attitude towards their ruler from the religious point of view; more specifically, in which ways pagan conception of kingship was

[1] Alfred trans., *Consolation of Philosophy*, Proem; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983) 131-132: "Now he beseeches and in God's name implores each of those whom it pleases to read this book, to pray for him and not to blame him if they can interpret it more accurately than he was able: for every man must say what he says and do what he does according to the capacity of his intellect and the amount of time available to him."

modified and affected by the arrival of Christianity and the Christian perspective of royalty. Chaney's research will provide basic points for the introduction of Anglo-Saxon kingship as related to religion, following the main argument that throughout the English medieval history "the folk saw their king as a sacral figure which held their tribal world together and related it to the cosmic forces in which that world was enmeshed [...] the ruler was himself a centre of the societal cult."[2] The resultant overview will clearly demonstrate the ideological heritage concerning the role of a king in the society and the consequent expectations of the person currently inhabiting the office by both the subjects and the rulers themselves.

In this section, however, it is important to bear in mind that there are no existing contemporary sources of the Christianization process apart from papal correspondence and histories composed on the continent. All surviving originally Anglo-Saxon documentation of the early stages of conversion come in the form of later works, namely the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which preserves the late ninth-century perspective, and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, composed in the 730s, and providing the early eighth-century view of the conversion. Our historical sources of the epoch are thus strongly influenced by the contemporary socio-political needs of their respective times of production and they cannot be considered as completely trustworthy as regards the truthfulness and accuracy of events.

The issues introduced in the theoretical chapter should be reflected in the subsequent development of kingship and should be discernible within the literary and visual evidence from the studied periods, i.e. in the ideas and theories inserted into King Alfred's translations, and also in the iconography and composition of the later kings' portraits.

[2] William A. Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*: *The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Frome and London: Manchester University Press, 1970) 3.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. "Authorship" in Anglo-Saxon England

2.1.1. Language and Literacy

Language and literacy are key requirements of any written record and as such they deserve to be discussed within a study of authorship. This section will focus on these factors as related to the English medieval society. As Kelly correctly points out, it would be too obvious and also wrong to begin a study of Anglo-Saxon literacy in the 7th century when Christianity and the Roman alphabet were already more or less established in the society.[3] Instead, the heritage of Anglo-Saxon literacy goes further back to pagan times with the continental runic alphabet brought from Germany, which is documented in the surviving corpus of short runic inscriptions on stones and other portable objects, as well as in longer stretches of text such as the excerpt from *Dream of the Rood* on Ruthwell Cross, or the Frank's (Auzon) Casket. Although a certain level of pagan literacy prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries is unquestionable, due to the limited amount of surviving evidence it is very difficult to form any conclusions as to any particularities of runic writing or the extent of runic literacy. On the other hand, the development and extent of Christian literacy is well recorded in various kinds of surviving documents, and will form the core of the current thesis.

Since the late 6th century onwards, Roman alphabet and the Latin language brought by foreign Christian missionaries started to replace traditional runic inscriptions, and both secular and ecclesiastical subjects were documented in the newly accepted written form. By the Norman Conquest in 1066, Latin had acquired a special status as the traditional language of literacy, and as Clanchy observes, "to be *litteratus* meant to know Latin and not specifically to have the ability to read and write."[4] This fact strictly limits the extent of literacy, i.e. the knowledge of Latin, to a very narrow circle of Anglo-Saxon population, representing mainly the ecclesiastical orders whose primary language of teaching and communication was Latin. High nobility would also participate in the medieval concept of literacy; however, wide-spread noble and even royal Latin literacy is a matter of the later Anglo-Saxon period, a proof being that even the ninth-century ruler Alfred the Great was not provided with Latin instruction in his childhood, and thus he had to learn Latin in his adulthood on his own initiative.

[3] Susan Kelly, "Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word," *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 36.
[4] M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993) 186.

Vernacular literacy and writings were quietly peeping in during the expansion of Latin literacy; and in the secular world there are numerous surviving documents showing both the use of Latin and the vernacular, very commonly in a single piece of writing. However, the development and spread of Latin and vernacular literacy had very different circumstances; each language aimed at a widely different sections of the medieval population and were to be used for very different purposes and topics. Latin was firmly associated with the newly introduced Christian religion; and through its usage in ecclesiastical matters, it evolved into a language inducing a sense of authority. This unconscious development caused Latin to become the primary means of composing not only ecclesiastical and scholarly documents but also texts of secular interest. The surviving pieces of evidence differ in their content according to the socio-historical development of the location in which they were stored and found: South England was primarily influenced by Rome and the Frankish empire, whereas the northern parts were evangelized by and thus under the Celtic influence of missionaries from Ireland and Iona. Apart from this ideological variety, Viking raids from the 8th century onwards and the following Scandinavian settlements largely assisted in the disappearance of secular documents in the northern and eastern parts of the island. Therefore, the surviving evidence of literacy from these areas is exclusively of ecclesiastical and scholarly character and thus in the Latin language only; whereas in the southern part of England there is a larger variety of surviving documents, including also texts of secular interest written in the vernacular, such as land-charters or law-codes. While discussing Anglo-Saxon lay literacy and its regional variety, Kelly also deals with the significance of Irish scholarship to the Northumbrian Church and she suggests that

> the Irish ecclesiastics, like the English but unlike the Italian and Frankish missionaries, spoke a vernacular which had no basis in Latin, and were therefore accustomed to learning the literary language of the church as a foreign tongue. It is possible that this experience of bilingualism was of value to them in the training of Anglo-Saxon clerics in literary skills, and the consequence could have been that literacy had a deeper foundation in the Northumbrian church.[5]

While mainly the northern regions of England provided us with ecclesiastical and scholarly works, evidence characterizing the secular affairs and the state of the written vernacular has to be searched for in the southern part of the country. The predominant source is the Latin land-charter and the connected vernacular documents dealing with land and property; Kelly states there are approximately 1500 such texts from the Anglo-Saxon period as a whole and about a third were composed in the 9th century or earlier.[6] Despite the doubtful authenticity of a large number of these documents, the earliest legitimate texts date from the 670s, and the charter as

[5] Kelly 39.
[6] Kelly 39.

such still represents the preeminent illustration of how the Anglo-Saxon secular society managed to assimilate and make use of the ecclesiastical gift of writing. The land-charter is essentially an ecclesiastical text type and it is typically concerned with "a grant of land by a king to an individual cleric as the representative of the community or to a member of the laity who wished to use the land to found or endow a monastery."[7] As regards the author and style of the text,

> [the charter] was drafted by an ecclesiastic, usually the local bishop or one of his scribes, on behalf of the beneficiary, [...and so] the conventional *formulae* employed have a strong ecclesiastical flavour, the most obvious manifestation of this being the substitution of spiritual punishments for the secular penalties threatened against those who refused to abide by the provisions of the grant.[8]

Apart from land-charters, also other texts dealing with the ownership of land and property demonstrate the process of the secular Anglo-Saxon world accepting the written form as a kind of validation of some aspects of one's existence. These documents are mostly wills: there are 58 surviving copies in total, 53 of which are written in the vernacular. In addition, a minor source of evidence is represented by the text type of ecclesiastical lease in which Latin and English bilingualism is also clearly attested. Largely due to King Alfred's educational program, by the 10th and 11th centuries English was established as an alternative language of scholarly writing, many ecclesiastics composed in the vernacular, and various types of English texts are found in many manuscripts, e.g. sermons, poetry, or translations from Latin.

2.1.2. The Person of the Author and Reader

Having discussed the vehicle of writing, i.e. the particular languages and their respective use and reputation in the society, the next point to examine is the person of the author responsible for applying the language into practice and creating actual pieces of writing. From the modern point of view, an author is obliged to be literate, i.e. to be able to read and write in a language. Nevertheless, medieval authors did not necessarily master either of these skills; frequently, people who could read were not always able to write, and it was a common practice for a person to dictate one's work to a more learned person who then transformed it into text. It is thus crucial to discuss similar cultural and societal particularities of the early Anglo-Saxon environment and the traditional means of communication which were gradually infiltrated and eventually conquered by the foreign Latin language and its accompanying Roman alphabet.

As Clanchy explains, in medieval England many prejudices and obstacles had to be overcome before literate modes of communication were accepted even by rulers or knights, both

[7] Kelly 43.
[8] Kelly 43.

of whom had the leading roles in the development of their counties.[9] One of the more generally medieval problems was that of selecting the language of literacy. There was a variety of dialects of the vernacular from which the literate language could have been chosen; however, all of them were eventually defeated by Latin even though it was a foreign tongue which was understood and spoken by a very narrow circle of the society. Another problem was the psychological barrier created by the transition from learning by ear to learning by looking at script, evidenced by later historical documents from the post-Conquest period up to 1307.[10] In Clanchy's words, "medieval writing was mediated to the non-literate by the persistence of the habit of reading aloud and by the preference, even among the educated, for listening to a statement rather than scrutinizing it in script."[11] The shift to the reliance on a durable text may have carried an impression of secure stability; on the other hand, those who preferred traditional wisdom communicated by real people may have understandably distrusted cold and impersonal sheets of parchment.

Also, the language used for articulating one's thoughts orally had to be modified to fit the written forms, which may have caused another reason for suspicion of the compromises required by the written mode. One of the essential consequences of the transition from memory to written record was already discussed by Socrates who said that the danger of writing was that it inserted a seed of forgetfulness into the soul and prevented men from finding the truth within themselves. "Writing was untrustworthy in itself", Clanchy explains, "and furthermore its use implied distrust, if not chicanery, on the part of the writer. An honest person held to his word and did not demand written proof."[12] It should be no surprise then that in medieval iconography the devil sometimes becomes a writer and demons are portrayed to record people's sins on parchments.

Considering the character of surviving documents, it may seem that all literate Anglo-Saxons, i.e. those able to manually compose a text, belonged to the ecclesiastical order. As Kelly states, "[conclusions derived from scribal competency only] tend to reinforce the traditional view that literacy was essentially an ecclesiastical preserve, for it is impossible to demonstrate that the occasional indication to the contrary is anything more than an exception."[13] However, the vast majority of all Anglo-Saxon evidence was discovered in monasteries and thus obviously represents only ecclesiastical and royal writing; and, in addition, there is a considerably higher chance of a book surviving 1000 years than single sheets of parchments such as charters or writs. It is highly probable that individual pieces of secular writings would be destroyed or lost after

[9] Clanchy 186.
[10] Clanchy 185.
[11] Clanchy 186.
[12] Clanchy 193.
[13] Kelly 36.

they were no longer needed, considering they were being stored among other common personal possessions such as private letters, and so on. Therefore, it is not known how much was written before 1066 in the secular sphere; and, due to the very limited evidence and countless forgeries, any substantial conclusions as to the Anglo-Saxon lay literacy are very complicated to deduce.

The earliest authors of written documents in the Anglo-Saxon society were *litterati*, i.e. those who were literate in Latin which was the language of the Church and scholarly matters. This fact also suggests the type of texts composed which logically focused on the topic of religion and promotion of Christianity and other ecclesiastical matters. However, as it is possible to predict the authors of the early texts, it is also possible to predict the audience or readership of the documents. Considering that the language and common theme were both considerably unknown to the laity, it could be proposed that early Anglo-Saxon texts were written by clerics for clerics, among other reasons to educate about the new religion or to administer various ecclesiastical matters. Gradually, as Latin started to be used also in documents of secular interest, especially in handling one's land and property, certain ecclesiastical formulae could be remembered even by the common people as phrases or idioms, without necessarily knowing the language as such.

The same development could be applied to Christian practices accompanying religious services for which at least a partial knowledge of Latin was obligatory. The subsequent rise of the vernacular was paradoxically triggered by those promoting Christianity, both churchmen and Anglo-Saxon rulers. Obviously, the knowledge of Latin as the main vehicle of Christianity did not supersede the importance of Christianity itself; therefore, in order to get more laymen involved in the religious practice, their everyday language of communication had to be employed. Clanchy deals with the ambivalent attitude of the western church towards Latin, stating that "the identification of *clerici* with *litterati*, which implied that only Latinists were the elect of God, was counterbalanced by the perennial message of the Gospels insisting that Christian teaching should be conveyed to everybody, and therefore to the crowd of *laici*."[14] As a consequence, various efforts were made to translate crucial prayers and sections of the Scripture into the vernacular, an obvious example being Alfred's own translations of Latin works. By the 11th century, both the vernacular and Latin were in active use in churches, i.e. the *Lord's Prayer* and the *Creed* were still recited in Latin, while sermons, homilies and similar texts were conveyed in English.

[14] Clanchy 237.

2.2. "Kingship" in Middle Ages

2.2.1 Ancient Conceptions of Kingship

2.2.1.1. Early Semitic Concepts

The ancient cult of kingship in the Near East provides an invaluable insight into the development of the universal folk understanding of a king and his gradual evolution into the medieval ruler, which was reflected also in the Anglo-Saxon medieval environment. Early Sumerian temple records are the earliest documents from which some general conclusions could be drawn regarding the structure of the society and the crucial social role of the temple itself. As Smith explains, the temple organized all activities within the community, both religious and secular events, urban and rural activities. The administrators were all priests and were divided into numerous orders, each of which had its own leader who always appeared to be more or less independent in his respective sphere. Smith states that "duties that we regard as typical of kings, the conduct of military operations or of foreign affairs, were undertaken by one whose title is written PA.TE.SI, read according to the modern fashion INSI, and translated as 'governor'."[15]

During the early Sumerian period, this term had an equal alternative in the title LUGAL which literally means "great man" and is usually translated as "king" or without any political connotation as "owner." The important deduction from this early documentation is that INSI was some kind of priest. This divine connection was further strengthened in Akkadian and Assyrian periods; Akkadian translation of INSI was *iššaku* which transformed into the form *šarru*, "king," which was consistently immediately followed by the name of a deity or the state. The etymology of the original word INSI is and will remain unknown as it reaches into a period preceding our scholarly historical knowledge. However, Smith suggests that the term implies that "the ruler was a tenant farmer of the god [...who] was responsible to the god for the use of god's land"[16] and he grounds his claim in epithets accompanying royal inscriptions such as "constant field labourer" or "faithful shepherd." The king was thus perceived as a mediator between the god and the folk, and the quality of his relationship with the god determined the quality of the god's land, which demonstrated itself in good or bad crops, delay of the coming rains, or natural disasters.

2.2.1.2. Hebrew Concepts

Moving forwards in history, the origins and character of Hebrew conception of kingship show some similar aspects to their early Semitic predecessor, but also add more features and especially

[15] Sidney Smith, "The Practice of Kingship in Early Semitic Kingdoms," *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958) 25.
[16] Smith 27.

more thorough documentation useful in the reconstruction of the contemporary perception of rulership. Johnson states that the primary reason for the establishment of a ruler in Hebrew tribal system was the pragmatic need for a protector against the attacks of neighbouring tribes. The title of this ruler was MELEK, usually translated as 'counsellor', but performing all common responsibilities of a king. There were three main obligations of a Hebrew ruler: the protection of the tribe in war, the administration of justice within the realm, and also retaining a favourable relationship with Yahweh as the only deity of Israel. The third feature of Hebrew conception of kingship is well attested in the Old Testament and Johnson comments on it as follows:

> [the king] was not merely the Messiah or the 'Anointed'; he was the Messiah of Yahweh, i.e. the man who in thus being anointed was shown to be specially commissioned by Yahweh for this high office: and, [...] with regard to the pouring out of Yahweh's 'Spirit' and the symbolic action which figures so prominently in the work of the prophets, it seems likely that the rite in question was also held to be eloquent of the superhuman power with which this sacral individual was henceforth to be activated and by which his behaviour might be governed.[17]

The act of pouring out God's Spirit at the rite of the king's anointment would centuries later reiterate in the Anglo-Saxon Christ-centred conception of kingship, reaching its climax and influence on the society in the 10th and 11th centuries. Similarly, the king's responsibility for the tribe's good fortune but also for any kind of catastrophe on a broader national scale, which was consequently recognized as God's punishment for the king's apparent disobedience, would also later reappear in the Anglo-Saxon environment. Therefore, it was very important for the Hebrew king to maintain good relations both with his mortal neighbours and with Yahweh; a good example of such conduct is the Hebrew king's superintendence of all religious events and acts of worship, which was performed by kings throughout the whole Davidic dynasty.[18]

2.2.2. Germanic Conception of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon Society

Early Germanic kingship is characterized by the fusion of the concept of divinity and rulership, which implies that the secular political office of a ruler is substantially indivisible from the sacral sphere of religious function. Thus, Anglo-Saxon king in the Germanic pagan period served both as an ordinary earthly ruler, yet was also anointed as a higher being responsible to the gods for his own and his subjects' proper conduct. Chaney adds another important feature of the royal position, stating that "[the king] is the charismatic embodiment of the 'luck' of the folk,"[19] which determines the relation of the divine and the human as "one of action, of 'doing', and to assure the

[17] A. R. Johnson "Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship," *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*, ed. S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958) 208.
[18] Johnson 211.
[19] Chaney 12.

gods' favourable treatment of the tribe, the king 'does' his office as mediator between them, sacrificing for victory, for good crops and for peace, 'making' the year."[20] Therefore, the Germanic king did not represent the ancient priestly type of leadership in which the kings essentially served as a spiritual guide of the people but not necessarily as an active negotiator responsible for the god's decisions. Instead, the Germanic king represented a dynamic and crucial element in the divine-tribal and tribal-divine communication, mediating the will of gods to his people and subsequently acting on their behalf; in other words, the king was "the guarantor of [his people's] *heil* who acts so that the gods bless them."[21]

The critical element of the royal "luck" is commonly referred to as *mana*. This term is coined by De Vries and it is defined by Magoun as "a force utterly distinct from mere physical power or strength, the possession of which assures success, good fortune, and the like to its possessor."[22] This force infuses the whole royal race including the remotest blood-related branches; and its source is claimed to be found in the direct blood-line originating with a god. Medieval European royal-houses both on the continent and in the Anglo-Saxon England claimed their descent from particular gods; therefore, any member of the extended royal family could be placed on the throne as each of them had *mana* circulating in their blood. As Kern explains,

> it was the virtue of their blood that lifted the sons of Woden, the Astings, the Amals, and so on, out of the ranks of the folk, though without bestowing upon any individual prince a right to the throne independent of the popular will. The family possession of the throne was as inviolable as the right of any individual prince to succeed to it was insecure.[23]

This inheritance-based authority and divine right to rule was acknowledged even in Christian times, as it is shown in one of Alcuin's letters to Kent in 797: *Et vix aliquis modo, quod sine lacrimis non dicam, ex antiqua regum prosapia invenitur, et tanto incertioris sunt originis, quanto minoris sunt fortitudinis*.[24] In other words, the further the kings' origin from the divine royal race, the more diminished level of courage and essentially kingly or godly features they possess. In addition, Alcuin's description of Offa's dynastic purges as sheer evil and the premature death of his son Ecgbert as its consequential divine punishment demonstrate the continuing belief in the king's obligation to act righteously, i.e. in accordance with the god's

[20] Chaney 12.
[21] Chaney 12.
[22] Chaney 15.
[23] Chaney 16.
[24] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. *Epistolarum*. "Alcvini Epistolae," IV, Ep. 129, p. 192. Hereon referred to as *MGH*. Accessed via https://archive.org/details/monumentagerman04geseuoft. Trans. Chaney, 17: "Scarcely any of the ancient royal kindred remains, and by as much as their origin is uncertain, by so much is their power less."

commands, and the subsequent divine repercussions of the king's disobedience and the consequential enragement of the deity.

The Anglo-Saxon kings retained some traditions characteristic of old Germanic kingship performed still on the continent, specifically the need for consistent reassurance of royal divine origin. All eight surviving genealogies of Anglo-Saxon royal houses claim descent from particular pagan gods: seven of them feature Woden as their godly ancestor, namely the genealogies of Kent (in addition to Oisc), Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, Bernicia, Deira, and Lindsey. The kings of Essex are connected to Seaxnet who is identified both as a son of Woden and as the god Tiew (Tir).[25] Woden, the *Wuotan* in Old High German and the *Othinn* (Othin, Odin) of Old Norse, was in Scandinavia regarded as the deity of poetry, magic, and most importantly of war and battle, which makes him a suitable model for a ruler-warrior.[26] Considering that the king's effectiveness in war thus represents the primary requirement for the welfare of his people, the most vital earthly relationship of the king was that with his warriors. Therefore, pre-Christian OE heroic poetry frequently deals with the relationship of a ruler and his soldiers; and the notion of a good king was equal to a generous king, especially when reflecting the king's appreciation for his warriors' loyalty.

Woden's character and thus also the ruler's qualities were modified with the arrival of Christianity and the writers' literary embellishments of the royal genealogies in which Woden's ancestors were added, suggesting a further linkage to the Christian God and the Old Testament. Yorke regards as the most striking example of these clerical alterations the West Saxon genealogy, in which Woden's ancestry is traced back to Adam.[27] The Anglo-Saxon monarch central to the textual analysis of this thesis, King Alfred of Wessex, belongs to the West Saxon lineage originally starting with Woden, as well as his father Æthelwulf and the founder of the kingdom, Cerdic. The divine descent of the two latter rulers is documented in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in the genealogical preface to the Parker MS. A[28]; Asser incorporated Alfred's ancestry

[25] Chaney 29.
[26] An interesting parallel is provided in the tenth-century Bohemia. Saint Wenceslaus, nowadays venerated for his inherent goodness and Christian purity, is proved to have owned a helmet now known as the Helmet of St. Wenceslaus. This helmet belongs to the St Vitus treasury, it is most probably of northern origin, and, most importantly, its nose-piece is decorated with a figure which could be identified as the German god of war, Odin. Expert analysis has revealed that the helmet may have been used during actual fighting (it is as thick as other helmets used in battles and there is a scratch caused by an axe or some other sharp and heavy object). The historical treatment of Wenceslaus's reputation as a pure Christian soul disregarding his apparent warlike concerns demonstrates the general tendency of the medieval world to create personality cults and myths based on the omission of unsuitable information and the exaggeration and emphasis of the person's desirable qualities and actions.
[27] Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Saxon England* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 21.
[28] Parker MS, Corpus Christ College, Cambridge MS 173 fols. 1-32. Edition used in this paper: Earle and Plummer, eds., 1, p.2.

in his *De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi*.[29] Divine descent and authority of Anglo-Saxon rulers also appeared as a theme in the contemporary literature; for instance, in *Andreas*:

> *þa gen worde cwæð weoruda dryhten / heofonhalig gast, fore þam heremægene / 'Nu ic bebeode beacen ætywan / wundor geweorðan on wera gemange / ðæt þeos onlicnes eorðan sece / wlitig of wage, ond word sprece / secge soðcwidum, (þy sceolon gelyfan eorlas on cyðde) / hwæt min æðelo sien secge soðcwidum / (þy sceolon gelyfan eorlas on cyðde), hwæt min æðelo sien.*[30]

2.2.3. Etymology of Ruling Titles

The godly quality characteristic for the whole royal race can be also identified behind the numerous Germanic terms used to refer to a ruler, and also in the linguistic development of the PDE term "king." As opposed to the variety of historical connotations of the term, OED defines the primary meaning which is valid in the modern era as the "usual title of the male sovereign ruler of an independent state." However, the etymological development of the word offers a good insight into the medieval understanding of the ruler as a mediator directly connected to the deity, which in consequence enlightens the concept of kingship not only in the Anglo-Saxon world, but also in the majority of medieval European kingdoms. De Vries's etymological research of early Germanic ruling titles shows that "the new Germanic term *kuningaz* and its variations came into use in place of the older Indo-Germanic *raj-rex-riks* variants precisely to emphasize the religious character of the 'divine race'."[31] Some of the earliest adoptions of the Proto-Germanic term *kuninggaz* demonstrate the dichotomy of the medieval ruler; for example, the Finnish word *kuningas* is commonly translated "king", however, the Lithuanian word *kuningas* refers not to a secular leader of a people but rather to their spiritual guide, i.e. "lord," or "priest." This semantic shift to the religious sphere is also illustrated by later loans from Germanic, especially by the Old

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[29] W.H. Stevenson, ed. *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904) 157-160 (note). Accessed via https://archive.org/details/asserslifekinga00stevgoog: *Ælfred rex, filius Æthelwulfi regis; qui fuit Ecgberhti; qui fuit Ealhmundi; qui fuit Eafa; qui fuit Eoppa; qui fuit Ingild; Ingild et Ine, ille famosus Occidentalium rex Saxonum, germani duo fuerunt, qui Ine Romam perrexit, et ibi vitam praesentem finiens honorifice, caelestem patriam, cum Christo regnaturus, adiit; qui fuerunt filii Coenred; qui fuit Ceoluuald; qui fuit Cudam; qui fuit Cuthwine; qui fuit Ceaulin; qui fuit Cynric; qui fuit Creoda; qui fuit Cerdic; qui fuit Elesa; qui fuit Geuuis, [...] Qui Geata fuit Taetuua; qui fuit Beauu; qui fuit Sceldwea; qui fuit Heremod; qui fuit Itermod; qui fuit Hathra; qui fuit Huala; qui fuit Beduuig; qui fuit Seth; qui fuit Noe; qui fuit Lamech; qui fuit Mathusalem; qui fuit Enoch; qui fuit Malaleel; qui fuit Cainan; qui fuit Enos; qui fuit Seth; qui fuit Adam.*

[30] *Andreas*, II 727-734, *The Vercelli Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp (London: Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, Vol.II, 1932) 23; trans. Charles W. Kennedy, *Andreas* (Cambridge: In parentheses Publications, 2000). Accessed via http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/Andreas_Kennedy.pdf: "And again the Lord of hosts spake, the Heavenly Spirit, before that multitude: 'Now I bid a sign appear, and a wonder wax amid the multitude of men, that this image come down unto earth in beauty from the wall and speak, and in words of truth declare (that earls on earth may have belief) what my origin may be.'"

[31] Chaney 21.

Church Slavonic *kunegu* "prince" which gradually developed into the Russian *knyaz* or the Bohemian *kněz* "priest."[32]

The Old English more lengthy variants *cyning*, *kyning*, *cining*, and *cynig* were gradually reduced into shorter forms *cyng* or *cing* mainly due to the gradual, mainly Middle English, process of weakening of unstressed endings and the consequential reduction and the actual loss of such a vowel or syllable. Quite possibly, the two shorter variants could have been related to the OE *cynn* "family, race," which would cause its original meaning to be defined as a "leader of the people." OED comments on the differing opinions of this relatedness, stating two most dominant perspectives:

> Some take [the formal and semantic relation of *king* and *kin*] as a direct derivative, in the sense either of 'scion of the kin, race, or tribe', or 'scion of a (or the) noble kin' comparing *dryhten* (<*druhtino-z*) 'lord' < *dryht* (<*druhti-z*) 'army, folk, people', *dryht-bearn* 'lordly or princely child, prince', lit. 'child of the nation', Old Norse *fylkir* 'king' < *folk*, Gothic *þiudans* 'king', < *þiuda* people, nation. Others refer *kuningo-z* immediately to the supposed masculine *kuni-z*, preserved in comb. in Old High German *chuni-*, Old English *cyne-*, taking it as 'son or descendant of one of (noble) birth.'

The logical conclusion of the linguistic relatedness of these two terms is that the assumed inherent nobility of the person entitled a *cyning* does not affect merely the monarch himself, but also the whole royal family from which he descended and also his own descendents.

2.3. "Kingship" in the Anglo-Saxon Christian Society

2.3.1. Transition from Pagan to Christian

Upon the establishment of Christianity, the Germanic concept of kingship was not discarded; instead, pagan views and traditions merely assimilated within the new religion. Through royal authority supported by the divine descent, early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were one by one converted to Christianity under the influence of St Augustine and his company, as well as by Irish missionaries coming from the northern part of the island. King Æthelbert, the pagan ruler of Kent, had been familiar with the new religion via his Christian wife Bertha; and eventually he underwent conversion himself and was baptized by 601. Æthelbert's servitude to the new God included his active attempts to spread Christian faith among his people, or his occasional personal assistance at baptism. Nevertheless, upon his death in 616 many of his superficially Christianized kinsmen returned to paganism, lead by the new king and Æthelbert's son Eadbald. The old religion continued to be practised freely until it was officially outlawed in 640 when Eorcenbert ordered the destruction of pagan idols; nevertheless, pagan gods retained their influence even after

[32] *king*, n. www.etymonline.com.

Eorcenbert's decree, which is proved by another Kentish law from the end of the 7th century in which King Wihtred forbade making offerings to devils. While Christianity was becoming the dominant religion across the country, paganism and superstitions experienced a revival after the Viking invasions, partly due to the arrival and settlement of pagan Scandinavians who brought the practices of the old religion to their new homeland.

The process of transition from heathenism to Christianity and the acceptance of Christ were both alleviated by the parallel superiority-based relationship between God and the king which was familiar to both religions; to use Chaney's comparison, "the Anglo-Saxons understood the authority of Christ because He was the Son of God, as their pagan forebears understood the authority of the king because he was sprung from a god."[33] In other words, the divine authority was fundamental for both religions; therefore, many pagan beliefs based on a participation of a deity continued into the Christian times although the terms and societal conditions were changed. The pagan position of a monarch as a descendent of a god persisted in the omnipresent Christian image of an earthly king ruling under a heavenly one; the royal status thus maintained its uniqueness among the common folk. Similarly, the pagan *mana*, also referred to as *miht*, *maegen*, and *craeft*, transformed into the heavenly Grace. "In both religions", Chaney writes, "the king is the cosmic point through which is mediated divine help from above and sacrificial right relations with God from below; he is the tribal vessel between Heaven and earth through which Grace is shed on the folk."[34]

The king's responsibility for the welfare of the folk depending on his relationship with the deity also continues into the Christian era. In Chaney's terms, both the pagan and Christian king served as "the purifier of his people. As the priest-king of heathenism had to change any imbalance of nature and restore the 'luck' of the folk, so the Christian Anglo-Saxon king had to mediate for the sins of all his people."[35] In both cases, it was the ruler's duty to take care of the favourable relationship of the god and the people: the pagan king was accustomed to offer sacrifice or *blot* to the deity, the Christian king had to repent his own and his people's sins and attempt to bring the folk back to the way of righteousness required by God. There are various pieces of surviving evidence documenting this contemporary perspective of the king as the healer of his subjects' souls. For example, in the list of kingly duties, Alcuin also states *quo non pro se solummodo, sed pro totius gentis prosperitate Deum deprecari debet*.[36] Similarly, Boniface wrote

[33] Chaney 19.
[34] Chaney 55-56.
[35] Chaney 71.
[36] *MGH*. "Alcvini Epistolae," Ep. 18, p. 51: "[the king] ought to pray to God for the prosperity of his whole people."

to the priest Herefrith about Æthelbald of Mercia: "[...] let us all in common urge the aforementioned king to reform himself with his people that the whole nation, with its prince, may not perish here and in the future life, but that, by amending and reforming his own life, he may by his example guide his own people back to the way of salvation"[37]. Aelfric also shared this approach to the king's responsibility, adding in one of his homilies that if rulers do not obey God, then "God will manifest to them their contempt of Him either by famine or by pestilence"[38]. One of the earliest Anglo-Saxon Christian kings attempting to "purify" his people through a law-code was King Edgar who produced his fourth code as a reaction to a plague which he contributed to the sins of his folk and their refusal to pay tithes.[39]

To use another of Chaney's terms, pagan kings were also regarded as "bringers of victory" as their role was to plead for victory to a god, particularly Woden, by offering *blot* to the deity. This royal duty remained almost unchanged in the Christian England, although heathen sacrifice was not practised in the original form but was modified to suit the new religion, i.e. in the form of a prayer.[40] The best-known example of an Anglo-Saxon ruler asking for divine aid and so ensuring a victory through a private prayer is perhaps King Alfred's older brother Æthelred who, at the Battle of Ashtown, refused to leave his tent and join the battle until his pious sacrifice was concluded.

2.3.2. Christ-Centred Concept

The Anglo-Saxon connection of the king with God and Christ gradually resulted in bestowing upon the earthly ruler the status of Christ's representative among Christian people. This so-called Christ-centred kingship peaked in the 10th and 11th centuries; and it is demonstrated mainly in royal law codes which were to be observed as closely as God's commandments, and whose breaking would have been considered a sin. This parallelism of authority linking the figure of the king and Christ is further expanded to the office of a bishop whose responsibility was the spiritual guidance of the folk. Chaney also points out that "the legal structure of the king's position is analogous to the Anglo-Saxon comparison of the Cross of Christ with the throne of the king, both the dwelling place of majesty and of God's election."[41] The Old English poem *Dream of the Rood* exemplifies the comparison of the Cross to the throne of the human king; possibly suggesting that

[37] Haddan and Stubbs, eds., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, *III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869) 358. Accessed https://archive.org/details/councilsecclesia01hadd.
[38] Dorothy Whitelock, trans. and ed. *English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042*. Vol. 1, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 853.
[39] Chaney 72.
40 Cf. the vision of Constantine the Great prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. This story may have served as a prototype for later pre-battle praying rituals.
[41] Chaney 200.

Christ mounted the Cross in a similar manner as a king would mount his throne. In these particular lines, the PDE translations describe Christ's action as "hasten[ing] with eager zeal", depicting how Christ "got ready, resolute and strong in heart" and was "bold in the sight of many watching men, when he intended to redeem mankind." He is referred to as a "young hero (who was God Almighty)", a "warrior", and "the noble King, the Lord of heaven above."[42] This proposition is further supported by the shared particle of *suppedaneum* which forms the stepping area for both a throne and the Cross. Considering the latter object, Christ was standing on a wooden *suppedaneum* when being crucified, while a king's feet are placed on a similar kind of resting place when sitting on his throne.

This medieval Christ-centred perspective of kingship is thoroughly discussed by Kantorowicz in his study of the discovered tractates usually dated to 1100, whose author is most probably an unknown Norman cleric who is commonly referred to as Norman Anonymous. Regarding the historical accuracy of the text, it is important to realize that the author comments on political ideas which were no longer valid at his own period, but for which he may have felt certain nostalgia. This attitude led to an overemphasis of some of the past ideals; nevertheless, the text still offers a valuable summary of the dominant theory of kingship of the 10th and 11th centuries, which will prove useful in the analysis of Anglo-Saxon texts and images in the following chapters. As Kantorowitz himself warns his readers, the author was clearly a "champion of ideals of Ottonian, early Salian and Anglo-Saxon period [and so his text] shows Christocentric theory of kingship in its most concentrated, most consistent, most extreme form."[43]

Norman Anonymous explores several terms which clarify the identity of the Christ-centred medieval ruler. The first to be discussed is the notion of *persona mixta* which in general terms stands for a "'mixed person' in which various capacities or strata occured"; within the framework of this discussion, however, *persona mixta* refers to "the blending of spiritual and secular powers and capacities united in one person."[44] In the religious and political spheres, a "mixed person" is usually represented by the king and a bishop as they both serve and are connected to God, yet they both are mortal human beings; in other words, both the king and a bishop are endowed with a certain spiritual capacity despite their secular or earthly character.[45]

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[42] Richard Hamer, ed. *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970). Cf. translation and commentary of the poem by Jan Čermák, *Sen o Kříži* (Praha, Jitro: 2005).
[43] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997) 60.
[44] Kantorowicz 43.
[45] Medieval style of clothing typical of royal and clerical representatives also contributed to the mixed character of their position. For example, Saint Wenceslaus was frequently portrayed wearing a mitre which was a traditional headdress worn by bishops and abbots. This shared attribute may have assissted in the consequential

The king is also referred to as *christomimetes*, usually translated as an "actor" or an "impersonator" of Christ. Kantorowicz presents Norman Anonymous's chronology of earthly rulers according to their relation to Christ, starting with the Old Testament kings referred to as c*hristi domini* who were foreshadowing the coming of the true royal *Christus*. A good representative of this type of ruler is King David whose act of divine anointment is portrayed and nowadays preserved in Tiberius Psalter, Cotton Tiberius C. VI (fig.1). Following the advent of Christ in the human form and after his ascension and exaltation, the earthly kings would no longer represent Christ's foreshadowers, but rather his imitators; the Christian ruler thus becomes the aforementioned *christomimetes*. Christ as the model and *christomimetes* as the copy are claimed to reflect each other almost entirely, the only difference being the temporal aspect:

> Christ was King and *Christus* by his very nature, whereas his deputy on earth was king and *christus* by grace only. For whereas the Spirit "leaped" into the terrestrial king at the moment of his consecration to make him "another man" (*alius vir*) and transfigure him within Time, the self-same Spirit was from Eternity one with the King of Glory to remain one with him in all Eternity. [...] The king [then] *becomes* deified for a brief span by virtue of grace but celestial King *is* God by nature eternally."[46]

The metaphor of royal "twinship" originates from the king being considered *gemina persona* which is yet another term used by Norman Anonymous to refer to the ruler. Christ is *gemina persona* by nature; the terrestrial king is also two-natured – human and divine – but only artificially by the effect of God's grace and temporarily for the time of his rulership. The king's power and authority could be described in a similar manner. The power of the earthly king is comparable to the power of God, the only difference is that God's power was created by nature, whereas the ruler's power is a product of God's grace. Therefore, the earthly ruler disposes of the same authority as God and Christ, and all his decisions and actions as a mortal human being are supported by their divine approbation.[47]

As stated above, a bishop was also regarded a *persona mixta* and thus also *gemina persona*; and, from this point of view, there was no substantial difference between the king and a bishop or a priest apart from their different rank. As Norman Anonymous writes, *unde et uterque in spiritu et Christus et deus est, et in officio figura et imago Christi et Dei est. Sacerdos sacerdotis, rex regis. Sacerdos inferioris officii et naturae, id est humanitatis, rex superioris, id est divinitatis*.[48] All in all, the Christological theory of kingship views the king as the ideal

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perception of the king's and bishop's power as equal, assigning the king a certain amount of sacral power and the bishop with some secular authority.

[46] Kantorowicz 47.

[47] For more information, see Kantorowicz 49-51.

[48] *MGH*, *Libelli de lite*, Vol. III (Hannover Hahn, 1897) 667. Trans. Kantorowicz 56: "[Both king and bishop] are in spirit *Christus et Deus*; and in their offices they act as antitypes and images of Christ and God: the priest

reproduction of Christ on earth, encompassing several natures within one person, all in accordance with the king's divine model which is at once God and man. Thus, the royal embodiment of *christomimetes* has to correspond to both these natures and is further enriched by the mixture of secular and sacral sphere also mixed within the king's divine model. As Christ is at once King and Priest of the humankind, the concepts of kingship and priesthood have to be reflected in his earthly representatives, i.e. in the king and the bishop, whose combined nature transforms them into *personae mixtae* (affecting both the sacral and secular world) and *personae geminatae* (human by birth but divine by grace).

As a result, the Christian Anglo-Saxon king was bestowed with great responsibility not only for the secular issues affecting the welfare of his lands and people, but also for all sacral affairs in which he shared authority with bishops and priests. Not only was it the king's duty to lead military campaigns and solve other problems of this world, but he also had to make sure his people behaved as proper Christians and worshipped God and Christ more than their earthly wealth and riches. Considering these two spheres separately, it may seem quite difficult for the king to successfully control both; however, from the perspective of a sacred man ruling an earthly kingdom, the two levels become inter-connected through the relation of causality. In a society transitioning from paganism to Christianity, religion as such forms a significant part of the people's lives, be it the common folk, nobility or the royal families. The selected leader of such a spiritual society, in this case of the Anglo-Saxon England, was first of all a mediator between the deity and the folk. Therefore, it was the ruler's sacral office that directed his primary responsibilities; secular affairs became results emerging from good or bad relationship with the currently venerated god. Consequently, the Christian monarch fulfils the position of a priest-king who attempts to guide himself and his people to represent good Christians. His sacral responsibilities then necessarily comprise of various tasks, including the encouragement of the folk to follow God's commandments, their regular attendance of the Mass, and last but not least their careful reading and study of the Scripture.

The king thus also acts as a teacher and a spiritual guide, providing his people with necessary tools which would enable them to walk the path of righteousness and to become diligent members of the Church. As Christianity was originally thoroughly dependent on Latin, i.e. only the knowledge of Latin opened the door to both oral and written discussions of Christian doctrines, a vast majority of Anglo-Saxons who communicated only in the vernacular were facing a fundamental challenge had they desired to convert to the new religion. The knowledge of the

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of the Priest, the king of the King, the priest acts as the antitype of the inferior office and nature, i.e. His humanity: the king, as that superior office and nature, i.e. His divinity."

foreign language was the key to the knowledge of the religion; consequently, if Anglo-Saxon kings wished to rule Christian people, they had to provide for the folk's education either in the form of Latin instruction, or rather by issuing English didactic texts and translations of Latin theological works.

2.4. Christianity in the Hands of Anglo-Saxon Kings: 597-871

In general, Anglo-Saxon kings up to the late 9th century were undergoing a transition from paganism to the full acceptance of Christianity; and of course, due to the socio-political situation of individual kingdoms as well as their geographical position, the new religion was received at various speeds with different levels of true devotion and conviction. The evidence of active kingly participation in Christianity survived in the form of written documents, confirming the monarchs' interest in ecclesiastical texts, their acts of founding new monasteries, bringing foreign bishops to spread the faith, or their decision to learn about divine wisdom in the seclusion of a clerical community.

Some pagan habits naturally continued and were adhered to even in the Christian era; for example, in case of a moral conflict with the Church, the kings arranged God's forgiveness by building new monasteries or offering other kinds of post-sin compensation to the deity. The hagiographical work known as *The Legend of St Mildrith* provides a good example of this strategy: Eorcenbert of Kent had under his protection two of his orphaned nephews, Æthelbert and Æthelred, who were murdered by Eorcenbert's own son, Ecgbert, due to his fear of his cousins' possible claim to the throne. At that particular time the possible successors of a king could be any of his sons; however, usually only the descendents of one of these sons would inherit the ruling lineage. Consequently, first cousins found themselves quite frequently in intense power struggles and Ecgbert's decision demonstrates one possible resolution of this complicated situation. York adds that in Kent there was a general expectation that only the current kings' sons would succeed to the throne, leaving more distant relatives wishing to become rulers with no other alternative than to terminally eliminate their rivals.[49] As a natural consequence of this sin, Ecgbert was forced to offer compensation and thus he founded a monastery on the Isle of Thanet where the assassinated princes' sister became the first abbess.

Some kings, on the other hand, either took Christian teachings closer to their hearts or simply recognized a profitable outcome from observing Christian laws, be that as it may, certain Anglo-Saxon rulers devoted a considerable amount of time to activities suitable for good Christian kings and Christians as such. As stated above, in the old religion the ruler was

[49] For more information, see Yorke 35.

considered the mediator between people and the deity; the god's favours or punishments and thus the people's welfare or suffering highly depended on the king's devotion and actions. This belief was smoothly transferred into the new religion. The king was still the one person who was obliged to be a perfect follower of God; and common people were not able to affect their own happiness and fate exclusively through their own labour and effort. The persistence of this approach to kingship is evidenced by the writings of Alcuin, an influential scholar of the late 8th century who was born in York but worked at the court of Charles the Bald, and who defined the ideal king as being "a *doctor*, a teacher, to his people as well as a *dux*, a war-leader."[50] In one of his letters to a king, Alcuin wrote that *legimus quoque quod regis bonitas totius est gentis prosperitas, victoria exercitus, aeris temperies, terrae habundantia, filiorum benediction, sanitas plebis, [...] quia aequitas principum populi est exaltatio.*[51] The pagan doctrine was thus inherited into the new religion; and with the gradually pervasive reference to the king as the imitator or earthly deputy of Christ, there was a growing pressure and expectations of the king's wisdom and obedience to Christian laws, his worship of God and Christ, and also the fulfilment of God's will which included the ruler's active participation in the spread of religion in the society.

On the personal level, kings tended to educate themselves through reading, ordering, and listening to copies of various kinds of religious and historical texts; for the purpose of collective instruction and the improvement of the folk, kings issued laws which dealt with ecclesiastical matters, invited skilled foreign bishops and monks to assist in the spread of religion, and supported the attendance of Masses and learning in general. As Kirby observes, Bede implies that King Ceolwulf of Northumbria was actively interested in the production of *Ecclesiastical History*, which prompted Bede to recognize the king's love of religion and to send him a draft of the work to comment on:

> *GLORIOSISSIMO REGI CEOLUULFO BAEDA FAMULUS CHRISTI ET PRESBYTER HISTORIAM gentis Anglorum ecclesiasticam, quam nuper edideram, libentissime tibi desideranti, rex, et prius ad legendum ac probandum transmisi, et nunc ad transscribendum ac plenius ex tempore meditandum retransmitto; satisque studium tuae sinceritatis amplector, quo non solum audiendis scripturae sanctae uerbis aurem sedulus accommodas, uerum etiam noscendis priorum gestis siue dictis, et maxime nostrae gentis uirorum inlustrium, curam uigilanter impendis*.[52]

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[50] H. R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England, 500-1087* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984) 27.

[51] *MGH*, *Epistolarum*, Ep. IV, 18, 51. Alcuin here associates a people's luck, success in war, welfare and health, and the abundance of land with the king's personal morality; thus, the exaltation of the ruler allows the prosperity of his people.

[52] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, "Praefatio," hereon referred to as *EH*; trans. L.C. Jane (Temple Classics, 1903). Both the original and the translation were accessed via www.thelatinlibrarry.com: "TO THE MOST GLORIOUS KING CEOLWULPH, BEDE, THE SERVANT OF CHRIST AND PRIEST FORMERLY, at your request, most readily transmitted to you the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, which I had newly published, for you

According to a reference in one of Alcuin's letters, King Offa was also one of the owners of Bede's *History*[53]; moreover, in a letter from 796 Alcuin appreciated Offa's eager attempts to encourage learning in the kingdoms but also reminded the king of his royal responsibilities.[54] King Ælfwald of East Anglia also belongs to rulers supporting the production of ecclesiastical written works, which he proved in 749 by his request from Felix, a saint and the first bishop of the East Angles, to write *Lives of St Guthlac*.

Aldfrith of Northumbria, who succeeded to the throne after the defeat of his brother and king Ecgfrith, lived at the time of his brother's military campaign against the Picts in exile on Iona. Surrounded by Irish monks, he dedicated himself to study and both Bede and Alcuin expressed great appreciation of Aldfrith's zeal for ecclesiastical learning: Bede described him as "a most learned man, [...] most learned in the Scriptures"[55]; and Alcuin wrote that "he was devoted to the pursuit of learning from his earliest years, a wise man who was both king and teacher."[56] These statements already demonstrate the aforementioned medieval tendency to idealize the current and past kings;[57] the ruler was in fact composed of two layers: that of the actual person with all his positive and negative traits, and the imagined ideal to which he should aspire and which is presented to the public by chroniclers loyal to the royal family.

Oswald, the son of Æthelfrith and Acha of Deira, also belongs to strongly devoted and diligent Anglo-Saxon Christian kings who actively promoted the religion and were trying to expand its influence among the people. In contrast to other kings, Oswald's strategy did not primarily focus on learning through the distribution and study of ecclesiastical texts, but rather on the support and foundation of monasteries and, to use modern terminology, on the supply of qualified human resources. Oswald is linked to the establishment of episcopal seats at Dorchester and at Lindesfarne; and similarly as Alfred's brother Æthelred, also Oswald is known to have prayed to God on the eve of a battle in which he subsequently defeated Cadwallon. While praying at the battlefield, he is claimed to witness a vision of St Colomba, which urged him to send for Bishop Aidan from Colomba's monastic foundation on Iona, the place of his own conversion to

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to read, and give it your approbation; and I now send it again to be transcribed and more fully considered at your leisure. And I cannot but recommend the sincerity and zeal, with which you not only diligently give ear to hear the words of the Holy Scripture, but also industriously take care to become acquainted with the actions and sayings of former men of renown, especially of our own nation."

[53] Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the 8th Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946) 245-6.

[54] *EHD* 850: "You, most wise ruler of the people of God, correct very diligently your people from perverse habits and instruct it in the precepts of God, that the land given to us by God may not be destroyed for the sins of the people. Be a father to the Church of Christ, a brother to the priests of God, and kind and just to all the people, moderate and peaceful in all your bearing and speech, and ever devout in the praise of God."

[55] D. P. Kirby, *Earliest English Kings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 119.

[56] Kirby 119.

[57] See p. 19., n. 26.

Christianity. He was slain in 642 by the pagan Penda, which resulted in his veneration as saint, and is now considered a Christian martyr.

Some kings decided to choose the most radical form of their expression of total devotion to God, i.e. they renounced all worldly pleasure and riches, abdicated from the post of a king, and joined a monastery to become monks. This action was performed by Ceolwulf of Northumbria in 737 who became a monk in Lindisfarne and was consecrated a saint; Æthelred of Mercia abdicated in 704 to become a monk at Bardney, and five years later also Cenred abandoned the rule to become a monk in Rome where he was accompanied by Offa. The West Saxon king Centwine abdicated and joined the monastery shortly after his conversion in mid-680s; his successor, Caedwalla, remained in the royal office only for two years before he abdicated in 688 and went on a pilgrimage to Rome where he was subsequently baptized; and about fifty years later, in 726, also King Ine left the kingdom and departed to Rome.

East Anglia also presents good examples of pious kings, the most notable being King Sigebert. After the death of King Readwald, there was an internal conflict between his son Eorpwald and his half-brother Sigebert who was consequently driven into exile to Francia. Both brothers accepted Christianity in their respective places of residence; however, Eorpwald's conversion provoked pagan reaction and he was slain by Ricbert still in the same or the following year. Sigebert then introduced Felix as the first bishop of East Anglia and ruled the kingdom for a short period before his abdication and joining the clergy. However, his life did not end peacefully in a monastery as he may have wished but on a battlefield, for when Penda attacked the kingdom, Sigebert was withdrawn from the monastery and forced to join the army; as Bede recounts, *Illo nolente ac contradicente, inuitum monasterio eruentes duxerunt in certamen, sperantes minus animos militum trepidare, minus praesente duce quondam strenuissimo et eximio posse fugam meditari*.[58] Due to his monastic vows, as Bede records, the former king was armed only with a stick[59] but he was most probably killed by his own kinsmen because they could not come to terms with his new morality which caused him to repeatedly spare his enemies and forgive their wrongdoing, which was directly opposed to the traditional Germanic heroic values.

[58] *EH* III, 18; trans. Jane: "He refused, upon which they threw him against his will out of the monastery, and carried him to the army, hoping that the soldiers would be less disposed to flee in the presence of him, who had once been a notable and a brave commander."

[59] *EH* III, 18: *Sed ipse professionis suae non inmemor, dum opimo esset uallatus exercitu, nonnisi uirgam tantum habere in manu uoluit: occisusque est una cum rege Ecgrice, et cunctus eorum, insistentibus paganis, caesus siue dispersus exercitus*. Trans. Jane: "But he, still keeping in mind his profession, whilst in the midst of a royal army, would carry nothing in his hand but a wand, and was killed with King Ecgric; and the pagans pressing on, all their army was either slaughtered or dispersed."

> The magnanimous Alfred [...] king of the Saxons, unshakeable pillar of the western people, a man replete with justice, vigorous in warfare, learned in speech, above all instructed in divine learning. For he had translated unknown numbers of books from rhetorical Latin speech into his own language – so variously and so richly, that [his] book of Boethius would arouse tearful emotions not only in those familiar with it but even in those hearing it [for the first time].[60]

3. TELLING TEXTS: KING ALFRED'S REFORMATION

3.1. Reasons behind Alfred's Fascination with Learning

3.1.1. Practical Motives

The practical advantage of ruling literate people who are able to be influenced by written documents and in turn to influence others is by itself an invaluable assistance to the ruler. The period of the late 9th century witnessed the Anglo-Saxon world endangered by the Viking expansions and kingdoms disintegrating under the power of Scandinavian ransacking. It was necessary for any individual resolute to save the society to emanate great authority and respect in order to persuade his allies and laity to support his defensive plans and to risk their well-being already compromised under the rule of the usurper. This authority and the accompanying trust could be achieved by the effect of celebratory stories and other works commenting upon the inherent goodness of the king, possibly connecting his persona directly to the honoured rulers of the ancient times or the Old Testament.

In the particular case of King Alfred, the compilation and wide circulation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, most probably initiated by the king himself, may reflect this ruling strategy. As Yorke suggests, "the historical records produced during Alfred's reign can [...] be interpreted as part of his desire to galvanize his people against the Vikings. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for instance, celebrated past successes of the West Saxons under the leadership of the Cerdicings against other foreign enemies."[61] "Alfred must have known", she continues, "that further Viking attacks were likely and was anxious to motivate his people to continue fighting and to remain loyal to the West Saxon royal house."[62] Surely, this pragmatic use of literary works could have been one of the driving forces of Alfred's reformatory endeavours, which may lead to conclusions similar to that of Wallace-Hadrill who says that "we hold that Alfred was a great and glorious

[60] "Æthelweard's account of the closing years of Alfred's reign," trans. and eds. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) 191.
[61] Yorke 153.
[62] Yorke 129.

king in part because he rightly implies this."[63] Although we can correctly admire Alfred's skill to use the contemporary written media to promote his political cause among the people, there are still more significant motives behind his educational reform and desire for knowledge.

3.1.2 Love of Literature and Learning

According to historical records documenting Alfred's life and personal development, his genuine strife for knowledge could be discerned since his early childhood. Asser qualifies the king's fondness of learning as one of his many inherent and positive personality traits, making Alfred stand out among his brothers, surpassing them in his knowledge of the written word, his inborn goodness, and also his wisdom. Asser writes, "from the cradle onwards, in spite of all the demands of the present life, it has been the desire for wisdom, more than anything else, together with the nobility of his birth, which have characterized the nature of his noble mind."[64]

Although he did not enter the literate world until his later years, he still managed to become intrigued with literary works and he devoted much of his time to study. As Asser recalls, "by the shameful negligence of his parents and tutors he remained ignorant of letters until his twelfth year [...] he was a careful listener, by day and night, to English poems, most frequently hearing them recited by others, and he readily retained them in his memory."[65] Probably the most famous anecdote documenting Alfred's early enchantment with literature is also recorded by Asser in his *Life*, describing a competition presented by Alfred's mother to her sons in which she promised a book of English poetry to the one who memorizes it the fastest, eventually giving it to little Alfred. In later years of his life, Alfred still displayed great yearning for knowledge and self-education, as well as sorrow and regret had this desire been unfulfilled: "He used to affirm, with repeated complaints and sighing from the depths of his heart, that among all the difficulties and burdens of his present life this had become the greatest: namely, that at the time when he was of the right age and had the leisure and the capacity for learning, he did not have the teachers."[66]

In his adulthood, due to the lack of suitable scholars in Wessex, Alfred had to turn to other regions for intellectual resources. Asser, himself a Welshman, documents the recruitment of bishops and priests from Mercia (Æthelstan, Werferth, Werwulf, Plegmund) and from the continent (Grimbald and John the Old Saxon). At first, Alfred was their exclusive student and with their help he managed to learn Latin and became acquainted with various theological texts.

[63] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975) 213.
[64] "Life of King Alfred," trans. and eds. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) 74-75.
[65] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 75.
[66] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 76.

After the stage of diligent self-improvement, he decided to actively participate in the education of his subjects, which he stated in the Prose Preface to the translation of *Pastoral Care*.

3.1.3 Love of Christianity and God

Of course, Alfred's inclination to specific types of written works must have developed as he progressed in life; however, the essential love of learning remained and possibly strengthened each year. By the time of his educational reform, the king had clearly evolved into a strongly religious person, which consequently affected his understanding of the nature of terrestrial events, leading him to react and make decisions in accordance with his Christian faith. Considering the character of Alfred's literary endeavours and accessible records of his personality, it can be easily assumed that the king's resolution to get involved in the spread of learning was mainly triggered by his religious beliefs. King Alfred thus belongs to Anglo-Saxon rulers who demonstrated a self-conscious approach to the spread of Christianity, which was in Alfred's case neatly blended with his deep interest in learning and wisdom in general.

Alfred's experience of Christianity started in his early childhood. His trips to Rome where he accompanied his father, King Æthelwulf, affected both his thirst for learning as well as his religious development. According to the *Chronicle*, his first departure to Rome and the then Pope Leo IV is dated to 853 when he was only four years old; his second visit, as Asser claims, was arranged only two years later and at this time Alfred was accompanying his father and Charles the Bald, king of the Franks. Kirby points out that such a close proximity between the two visits seem highly unlikely; nevertheless, it may be explained by Æthelwulf's possible plan for Alfred to join the Church.[67] Be it as it may, these and later trips to Rome and Carolingian France had a strong impact on Alfred's later life, especially regarding his attitude to the rich cultural environment of France, the teachings of Pope Gregory I (540–604), also known as Gregory the Great, and the choice of *Pastoral Care* to be translated for his educational scheme.

3.2. Historical Background of the Reform

The period of reconstruction and reform is dated from Viking capitulation in 878 and smoothly continues until their eventual return in 892. These 14 years were dedicated to reforms in the military, civil, and also cultural spheres of life; and as the Viking invasions were considered a divine punishment for the Anglo-Saxon degenerated morality, the reforms undertaken were supposed to repair past mistakes and prevent future tribulations. This proposition is also supported by Keynes and Lapidge who said that "if [Alfred's] military reforms can be regarded as

[67] Kirby 165.

prevention, there is reason to regard his programme for the revival of religion and learning as the intended cure." In other words, better defence system and military organization saves the day when it is too late and the people are already paying for their moral ignorance; and vice versa, in order to bring welfare and safety back to the kingdom, Christian values need to be widely relearned and re-established. Moreover, during the Viking invasions heathen warriors were in fact attacking the Christian world, which shows a further escalation of urgency for the revival of Christianity and for a restored spiritual unity of the people.

It can be thus easily argued that Alfred was convinced of the direct link between the earthly sufferings (or blessings) and the standard of devotion and learning of his people. From this perspective, it is becoming clear what exactly learning meant to Alfred. In the modern world, education is viewed to belong to the secular sphere; both learning and teaching are thought of as essential parts of the educational system, broadening one's mind and exercising the inborn intellect. The practical skills of reading and writing are extremely crucial as they open the door to textbooks which represent the main source of knowledge. Each educated individual is useful for the society as they raise the bar of its intellectual standard; however, this usefulness does not involve a dooming or saving quality affecting the fate of the whole community, as it is not necessarily connected to divine wisdom or the encouragement of religious morality. On the other hand, Alfred's main motive behind his literary endeavours was to reinstate Christian morals within the society, which also explains the particular choice of *bec, ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to* wiotonne.[68] Therefore, literacy and the focus on English served as a key to the eventual learning stage which involved the process of gaining knowledge of Christian values which were hidden in books directly translated or whose translation was ordered by Alfred.

In this view, the king was not only the writer or composer of the texts, but by accepting this role he also became a teacher or even a priest-like figure. In addition, considering the close relationship between the earthly and the heavenly ruler, the king was truly the ideal initiator and leader of such a large-scale spiritual reform, as there was nobody else possessing a higher degree of both secular and sacral authority, further supported by God himself. Yorke links this kingly status to the previously discussed Frankish theological impact on the Anglo-Saxon concept of rulership, and sums up Alfred's possible perspective: "Like Charlemagne, Alfred seems to have believed that many of his problems as king would be solved if his subjects developed a similar

[68] "Pastoral Care," trans. and eds. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) 126: "most necessary for all men to know."

consciousness of doing their Christian duty. [...] Alfred's duty was to stand firm against the pagan Vikings; that of his subjects was to assist him by obeying his orders."[69]

3.3. Asser's *Life of King Alfred*

While the emphasis of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was to portray Alfred as a victorious military leader, Asser's biography, in the Latin original entitled *Vita Alfredi regis Angul Saxonum*, stresses Alfred's role as a good king and a strongly devoted Christian, representing the ideal of terrestrial piety, humility, and wisdom. Very little is known about Asser himself, apart from his Welsh origin, Hebrew name, his eventual position as Bishop of Sherborne, and the fact he was one of the most crucial figures in Alfred's educational scheme. It is documented that he helped Alfred translate the *Pastoral Care* and that he himself translated Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.

Asser wrote the king's biography in 893 and it could be divided into two parts. Keynes and Lapidge briefly summarize the main points discussed in the work: the first part, concerned with Alfred's life up to 887, describes "the details of Alfred's childhood, [...] covers Alfred's illnesses [...], his children [...] and his recruitment of learned helpers including Asser himself [and] it ends with a translation of the *Chronicle*'s annals for 886 and 887"; the second part, covering the period after 887, is no longer based on the *Chronicle* but rather on Asser's direct experience of the king while teaching him Latin, and the content is thus concerned with "the distinctive character of King Alfred's rule, notably his encouragement of religion, his careful organization of his own affairs, and his deep interest in justice and the pursuit of wisdom."[70]

It has been suggested that Asser's intended audience were his fellow Welshmen and the main purpose of his work was to convince the readers of Alfred's ideal predispositions for the royal office, which in turn would contribute to the Welsh cooperation and support of West Saxon political affairs. This purpose, however, necessarily results in eulogistic style of writing which cannot be considered completely accurate and reflecting historical truth. This particular style can be also explained by Asser's possible intention to assist in the future canonization of Alfred, which would necessarily require a similar, almost hagiographic, text describing all his virtues and the purity of his motives; however, this possibility has to remain in the sphere of speculation for now. Although the *Life* may be partially regarded as a literary construct, it still provides an interesting view of Alfred's persona, which is described by Yorke as "a sensitive, if not neurotic,

[69] Yorke 153.
[70] Keynes and Lapidge 56.

scholar manqué who was much afflicted by ill health, but who eventually came to terms with his difficult life through his Christian studies."[71]

The first chapter provides a detailed genealogy of Alfred's royal heritage, linking him directly to the pagan god Woden and even further to Adam himself.[72] Not only did Asser focus on the purity of Alfred's Christian devotion as a human being and king, but he also acknowledged his divine origin, stressing thus his undeniable royal authority and moral superiority to all his subjects. The king's early devotion is emphasized by a proclamation of his regular habit of praying and giving alms, stating that "even from his childhood he was enthusiastic visitor of holy shrines",[73] which, however, was fairly common for all Christian kings. Alfred's personal piety and desire for divine wisdom is further evidenced by his commitment to religious texts, chapter 24 describes how "he learnt the 'daily round', that is, the services of the hours, and then certain psalms and many prayers; these he collected in a single book, which he kept by him day and night."[74]

Alfred's mysterious illness is commented upon in chapter 74 which is dedicated to his wedding, and is described to emerge as a "sudden severe pain [...] quite unknown to all physicians", allegedly caused by "spells and witchcraft [or] the ill-will of the devil, who is always envious of good men."[75] Alfred's attitude to his disease and his resulting behaviour are rather peculiar and give an interesting insight into the ruler's train of thoughts and beliefs. As Asser recounts, "in the first flowering of [Alfred's] youth [...] when he realized that he was unable to abstain from carnal desire, fearing that he would incur God's disfavour if he did anything contrary to His will, he very often got up secretly in the early morning at cockcrow and visited churches and relics of the saints in order to pray."[76] One of Alfred's frequent invocations was the plea for strengthening his determination to follow God's will through the infliction of some other illness which would be bearable and invisible on the outside. Alfred's wish was fulfilled when he "contracted the disease of piles through God's gift" although it brought him a lot of suffering and even "despair of life."[77] On a later occasion Alfred visited a church in Cornwall where he prayed for a substitution by a less severe disease, shortly afterwards "he felt himself divinely cured from that malady"; however, on his wedding day,

[71] Yorke 153.
[72] See p.20, n.29.
[73] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 89.
[74] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 75.
[75] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 89.
[76] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 89.
[77] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 89.

> another more severe illness seized him [...] which plagued him remorselessly by day and night from his twentieth year until his forty-fifth; and if at any time through God's mercy that illness abated for the space of a day or a night or even of an hour, his fear and horror of that accursed pain would never desert him.[78]

Alfred's personal issues may not seem too relevant to his socio-political decisions and the educational reform in particular; however, considering his illness from the perspective of the status of a medieval ruler, the private and public sphere of his existence were closely related. As discussed above, a complex heritage of the belief of royal divinity has been transmitted to the ninth-century England, starting with pagan mediator-kings whose actions were reckoned responsible for the god's favours or punishments, progressing further into Christianity and its Christ-like type of ruler. It is quite possible that this spiritual legacy, combined with the long tradition of West Saxon amicable relationship with Francia, enabled the late ninth-century Carolingian concept of "ministerial rulership" have an impact also on the Anglo-Saxon society. As David Pratt explains, the reign of Louis the Pious and later Carolingian rulers was enhanced by "defining their position as a *ministerium* or 'office' [which] exalted the ruler as a model of good conduct for the people beneath him to imitate, and the ruler's ability to rule his people was therefore generally held to be dependent upon his prior ability to rule his own body and his household."[79] Pratt continues to identify this royal devotion as the "clearest precedents for Alfred's own personal piety" as described by Asser above. The relation of causality is thus revisited and the kings' actions become observed by their subordinates and also by the kings themselves. Clearly, Alfred recognized his bodily afflictions as God's response to his sins, as a just punishment for his carnal desires. This kind of understanding of earthly existence is applicable to all spheres of life, linking positive events to God's satisfaction with people's behaviour and negative events to God's anger and disappointment.

Asser portrays Alfred also as a good father; chapter 75 deals with his treatment of his sons and daughters. At several occasions Alfred expressed great misery over not having been provided with qualified tutors in his childhood; and this early experience projected later into the provision of learning for his own children. His youngest son, Æthelweard, was attending a school with nobly born children or children of lesser birth, and was instructed in reading and writing, both in English and Latin. Edward and Ælfthryth were at all times attended by instructors and nurses, which obviously affected them deeply because "to the present day they continue to behave with humility, friendliness and gentleness to all compatriots and foreigners, and with great obedience to their father."[80] This link between an amiable personality and enthusiasm for learning is

[78] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 90.
[79] David Pratt, "The Illnesses of King Alfred the Great," *Anglo-Saxon England*, Vol. 30, Dec. 2001, 43.
[80] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 90.

revealed already in chapter 22 where Asser claims that "[Alfred] was seen to be more comely in appearance than his brothers, and more pleasing in manner, speech and behaviour."[81]

Chapter 76 initiates Asser's record of the motives and development of Alfred's support of education. Amidst the war with Vikings and while overcoming his bodily suffering, Alfred is said to read and learn English poems by heart, but also to listen "daily to divine services and Mass, and [to participate] in certain psalms and prayers."[82] Asser even claims that at night time, Alfred used to secretly visit various churches to pray. Yet again, Alfred's good nature is stressed in between the sections commenting upon his love for literature and learning and his self-improvement through Christian practices: "He similarly applied himself attentively to charity and distribution of alms to the native population and to foreign visitors of all races, showing immense and incomparable kindness and generosity to all men."[83] The aforementioned self-improvement in the Christian sphere was performed by "listening eagerly and attentively to Holy Scripture"; and, as in the previous part, also here Asser describes Alfred as not only an excellent king, but also as a wonderful human being:

> With wonderful affection he cherished his bishops and the entire clergy, his ealdormen and nobles, his officials as well as all his associates. Nor, in the midst of other affairs, did he cease from personally giving, by day and night, instructions in all virtuous behaviour and tutelage in literacy to their sons, who were being brought up in the royal household and whom he loved no less than his own children.[84]

This excerpt may remind us of the definition of *christomimetes*. In this case, Alfred is depicted as the king of not only his kingdom and the West Saxons but rather of all people, notwithstanding their social status, origin, or race. Similarly, he is willing to devote all his time, "day and night", to the moral and intellectual improvement of his people, guiding them to the path of virtue and righteousness, and teaching them how to read and write, which would enable them to gain more knowledge of the Scripture and other religious works.

Asser very dramatically records Alfred's mental suffering caused by his Latin illiteracy and the resulting inability to broaden his knowledge of religious and scholarly texts. Alfred is claimed to "cry out in anguish by day and night to the Lord [and] sigh continually because Almighty God had created him lacking in divine learning and knowledge of the liberal arts." Asser then compares Alfred to "the holy, highly esteemed and exceedingly wealthy Solomon, king of the Hebrews, who, once upon a time, having come to despise all renown and wealth of

[81] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 74.
[82] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 91.
[83] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 91.
[84] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 91.

this world, sought wisdom from God, and thereby achieved both."[85] The apparent and by now the numerously evidenced profound goodness of the king was bound to be rewarded by the satisfied God who was "unable to tolerate so well-intentioned and justifiable a complaint any longer."[86] As a result, four learned men arrived from the kingdom of Mercia in order to assist Alfred in his educational intention: Werferth, the bishop of Worcester; Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury; and also Æthelstan and Werwulf, both priests and chaplains. Later they were accompanied by Frankish instructors; namely Grimbald and John; and Asser himself who arrived from Wales.

The Christ-like character of Alfred's person is exhibited in another of his kingly activities, i.e. his role of a "painstaking judge in establishing the truth in judicial hearings [...] most of all in cases concerning the care of the poor."[87] Moreover, this aspect of Alfred's behaviour links him not only with Christ himself, but also with some of the venerated Old Testament kings, namely Solomon, whose royal judgments were renowned for their excessive wisdom and fairness. As suggested above, Alfred is portrayed as an earthly representation or a deputy of Christ, and thus he had to fulfil all the expectations of a divine figure, including a willing assistance of those in need, regardless their social standing. Asser describes the contemporary social conditions as strongly influenced by the power of worldly riches, unfortunately overpowering traditional Christian values. He explains,

> throughout the entire kingdom the poor had either very few supporters or else none at all, except for the king himself: not surprisingly, since nearly all the magnates and nobles of that land had devoted their attention more to worldly than divine affairs; indeed, everyone was more concerned with his own particular well-being in worldly matters than with the common good.[88]

These particular conditions called for an urgent revival of Christianity. The ideal leader of such a spiritual reform was the king, as he possessed a sufficient amount of both secular and sacral authority, and could direct both the secular sphere, e.g. the judicial environment, as well as sacral communities, i.e. the clergy. Asser talks about Alfred's method of intervention within the legal domain in chapter 106. The king served both as a judge in highly disputable cases in which none of the parties involved accepted the verdict of a regular judge as just; furthermore, possible cases of injustice were irrevocably disclosed by the king's thorough investigation. Alfred is said to control the fairness of all judgments passed during his absence, and had he found any discrepancies, he would confront the particular judge to find out whether the unjust sentence was

[85] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 92.
[86] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 92.
[87] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 109.
[88] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 109.

passed due to his ignorance or malpractice. In case the judges admitted that "they had not known better in the circumstances,"[89] then the king would answer as follows,

> 'I am astonished at this arrogance of yours, since through God's authority and my own you have enjoyed the office and status of wise men, yet you have neglected the study and application of wisdom. For that reason, I command you either to relinquish immediately the offices of worldly power that you possess, or else to apply yourselves much more attentively to the pursuit of wisdom.'[90]

In the reformation of the judicial community, Alfred's choice of the initial motivation factor was based on the judges' presupposed sinful devotion to worldly riches and pleasures. Whether unknowingly or on purpose, the king triggered their attention by proposing the possibility of losing the essentially transient wealth and power which in fact should be rightly abandoned or at least not regarded as important by a virtuous Christian. Asser accounts that "the ealdormen and reeves were terrified and chastened as if by the greatest of punishments, and they strove with every effort to apply themselves to learning what is just." "As a result," Asser continues, "nearly all [...] applied themselves in an amazing way to learning how to read, preferring rather to learn this unfamiliar discipline [...] than to relinquish their offices of power."[91]

3.4. "Books Most Necessary for All Men to Know"

3.4.1. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

The OE translation of Bede's Latin text entitled *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* is nowadays considered a part of Alfred's educational program, which, to paraphrase the king, qualifies the work to belong among the most crucial books for the whole kingdom to know. Alfred's selection of Bede's work for his scheme seems understandable and logical. Alfred nostalgically looks back to the happy and prosperous times of the 7th century which are the main focus of the *History*; and also, the work provides a sense of common history uniting all Anglo-Saxons, which appeared very useful in Alfred's turbulent late 9th century. Most importantly, however, Alfred surely shared Bede's main argument which is interspersed throughout the whole work and directs its content, i.e. that the world history is a result of God's decisions.

Bede and Alfred shared a similarly reproachful attitude to the level of learning and morality of their respective times; and both decided to use the bygone upright standards of behaviour as a model to which their contemporaries should aspire. Their intended audience comprised mainly of the clergy because they were in fact the primary morality teachers of the

[89] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 110.
[90] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 110.
[91] Keynes and Lapidge, "Life of King Alfred" 110.

laity; however, the *Ecclesiastical History* was originally written both for the sacral orders and the common people. Bede's style corresponded to this intention; and thus, as Campbell explains, Bede did not strive to impress by a "florid style and an outré vocabulary, he intended to be understood by an audience the capacities of some of whom he did not value highly."[92] Bede's language could be described as "both simple and moving" and the overall style recalls "that of the gospels in its brevity, concentration on essentials, and use of direct speech."[93] All in all, the original Latin text did not resemble the often very complex and difficult philosophical style of some of Alfred's other translations of choice; on the other hand, this quality in particular may have played an important role in Alfred's attraction to the work.

The *History* provides a concise story of the Anglo-Saxon evangelization by Christian missionaries and their resulting transformation into a Christian people. As such, the focus of the work is not on secular matters and events but rather on the history of the Church including the sequence of bishops and martyrs, lives of saints, stressing primarily the admirable persons and only briefly mentioning the corrupted ones. The major part of the whole text records the Christianization process in England from the arrival of St Augustine in 597 until 731.[94] This period, venerated by both Bede and Alfred, witnessed a dramatic rise of the new religion; Christianity became established and thrived in all larger kingdoms, and monasteries and ecclesiastical schools were founded across the country. Campbell mentions two good examples of the latter process: "Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, established a school at Canterbury where most subjects relevant to Christian learning, including Greek, could be studied [and] Benedict Biscop founded the twin monasteries of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow and collected abroad a library for them which must have been among the best in Europe."[95] Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury (668-690), was born in 602 in Tarsus, Cilicia, and is known to have been instructed in both secular and sacral texts in Greek and Latin. Prior to his papal consecration, Theodore lived as a monk near Rome, but then he was accompanied by Hadrian, then an abbot of a monastery near Naples, and they both departed for England. His twenty-two-year archbishopric is described by Bede as *neque umquam prorsus, ex quo Brittaniam petierunt Angli, feliciora fuere tempora.*[96] Benedict Biscop (628-690), on the other hand, was of Northumbrian origin and of noble birth; he served as a thane to King Oswiu until 653 when he accompanied his friend Wilfrid on a

[92] James Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1986) 2.
[93] Campbell 2.
[94] Campbell 2.
[95] Campbell 2.
[96] *EH* IV, 2. Bede described those 22 years as the happiest period in Anglo-Saxon history since the English arrived from the continent. For more information about the achievements and life of Theodore, see Michael Lapidge ed. *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

pilgrimage to Rome and subsequently renounced his worldly life. In 666 he was tonsured and became a monk at Lerins and in 669 Theodore appointed Benedict abbot of the then Sts. Peter and Paul monastery in Canterbury.

Unlike other historians, Bede's aim was to avoid, as much as possible, secular affairs and any kind of scandal; and in case they do appear in the text, Bede uses them as an emphasis of God's judgments so that a particular moral lesson is more directly transmitted to the reader. Therefore, the *Ecclesiastical History* does not provide a record of the decline of learning and devotion of Bede's own time; however, his criticism and issues that he considered most poignant can be found in his private correspondence with Bishop Egbert of York. In one his letters Bede expresses a strong disagreement with the current state of the Northumbrian Church, commenting upon the insufficient number of bishops, intellectual ignorance of many priests, ill-conduct of many monks, and also the laity financially exploiting the Church by owning the land of monasteries.[97] In Campbell's words, "the Church in Bede's day was not one in which it is, or was always, easy to draw the distinction between the lay and the clerical or even between good or evil."[98] This kind of criticism could also be applied to Alfred's own time, where learning and commitment to Christian values were commonly competing with the temptations of earthly wealth and power.

Apart from the factual proofs of the seventh-century high level of learning and devotion, Alfred also much appreciated the didactic character of Bede's work, which presented all the past welfare and flourish as an effect of divine providence and God's satisfaction with the kings' and clerics' good work. Thus, the morality of Bede's own time and also Alfred's period were supposed to be reconstructed with the help of models and good examples from the past. The clergy was provided with several models of Christian purity in the form of the biography of several bishops, e.g. St Augustine, Aidan, Chad, or Cuthbert. The highlighted virtues remained more or less the same since Augustine's arrival; the ideal condition was thus identified with the morality of the Primitive Church, including virtues such as devotion, steadfastness, poverty, and practising what they preached.[99] In addition, education was an activity closely connected to divine learning; for instance, Bede uses the verb "study" in a very narrow sense in his description of Aidan's journey from Iona to Northumbria: *omnes, qui cum eo incedebant, siue adtonsi, seu laici, meditari deberent, id est, aut legendis scripturis, aut psalmis discendis operam dare.*[100]

[97] Campbell 15.
[98] Campbell 16.
[99] Campbell 40.
[100] *EH* III, 5. Jane: "all those who bore him company, whether they were shorn monks or laymen, were employed in meditation, that is, either in reading the Scriptures, or learning psalms."An alternative translation was offered

The character of Christian kingship was also of vital importance to Bede and he devoted much of the *Ecclesiastical History* to the description of what it meant to be a good Christian king. Due to the complicated relationship between religion and the lay society in general, Bede attempted to remind the royal houses of their Christian duties and the transcendent priorities they ought to value. He sets good examples for the kings and their kinsmen, highlighting especially Oswald and Edwin as rulers worthy to imitate, as well as rulers who abandoned their position of power and began a new life in a monastery. In addition, the causal relation between Christianity and success is stressed very frequently; virtue is usually rewarded and sins are punished, which is well illustrated in the record of Oswald's life and achievements, or the peace and prosperity accompanying Edwin's reign as the result of his bringing Christianity to Northumbria. As Campbell observes, "[Bede] makes the duty of a king while reigning clear. It is to protect the Church, to observe its teaching and to defend his people in battle.[101]

All in all, Bede presented a dual understanding of the identity and role of a Christian king, reflecting the Christian problem of how to approach secular powers while still remaining God's faithful servant. In the Preface, Bede explicitly states that kings are divinely appointed to rule, which may suggest that God desires the selected person to achieve great deeds during his reign; on the other hand, all earthly power and wealth are considered mere illusions within a sinful world in which no true Christian should long to stay. There are two possible solutions to this existential problem, each of which was accepted and executed by various kings mentioned in the *History*. The first option was to completely adhere to the Christian value of poverty, disregard earthly riches and power altogether, and to leave the throne and enter a monastery to become a monk. The second option was to embrace the divine gift of earthly power and use it in accordance with Christian principles.

Apparently, Alfred perceived himself as the second type of Christian ruler. Observing the current adversary conditions within the kingdom, he admits that all people currently suffering, including the kings themselves, are the reason to blame; that their ignorance and low adherence to Christian teachings caused God's disappointment and the inevitable punishment. He also acknowledges his position of power as completely dependent on God's will, and through divine appointment and authority he attempts to act as a good Christian and ruler and tries to revive Christianity among his people. Due to his inborn yearning for learning, he knew that knowledge was found in books and qualified teachers, and because there was a lack of both in his kingdom,

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by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors eds. and trans., *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* III, 5 (Oxford, 1969) 226-7: "all those who went about with him, whether tonsured or lay-people, had to study, that is, to perform the task of either reading the Bible, or learning the Psalms."

[101] Campbell 14.

he decided to provide texts in the language most people understood as well as invite foreign scholars who would assist him in the process.

3.4.2. Gregory's *Pastoral Care*

Pope Gregory I, also known as Gregory the Great, occupied the papal office from 590 until his death. Shortly after his inauguration, he summarized all responsibilities of the clergy in his very influential text entitled *Regula Pastoralis* which was brought to England by St Augustine in 597. Almost three centuries later, Alfred included this treatise into his educational scheme, most probably because it was still regarded one of the most essential guides for the proper conduct and innermost aspirations of the ecclesiastical sphere. It provides a clear definition of pastoral duty, describing all motives, virtues, and personality traits desirable of a man wishing to take care of Christian souls. Such a spiritual guidance was highly valuable not only for Alfred's clergy, but also for himself as a secular leader. One of the basic responsibilities of the clergy is that of teaching their flock, which also could have heavily resonated within the king's beliefs and intuitive responsibilities linked to the royal office. All in all, King Alfred's choice of this particular work of Pope Gregory I seems to be quite understandable, considering the fact that the spiritual guidance included within the treatise was highly valuable and useful not only for the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical orders as such but also for the king's private contemplation of his position and his personal scrutiny of his own character.

3.4.2.1. Prose Preface

Alfred's translation of *Pastoral Care* is mainly known for its Preface in which Alfred introduces his educational scheme and expresses his attitude to the state of learning and morality in the contemporary Anglo-Saxon world. This short text, qualified by Morrish as a hortatory epistle[102], originally served as a letter addressed to every bishop whose monastery also received a copy of the translation and its purpose was probably dual: to explain the educational reform as such and to gain support of the bishops who represented the most crucial element in its execution. Both the letter and mainly the text proper of Gregory's treatise were supposed to arouse the ecclesiastics' sense of responsibility for the education and moral guidance of laity; and also to force them to re-evaluate their moral sense which needed to be especially virtuous considering their didactic role.

As Keynes and Lapidge explain, "[*Pastoral Care*] is concerned with the qualities necessary in the man who would be a shepherd of souls: it examines the character, motives and

[102] Jennifer Morrish, "King Alfred's Letter as a Source on Learning in England," *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986) 88.

virtues which such a man must have as well as the responsibilities he must undertake, and stresses the need for continual reflection and examination of conscience."[103] Gregory's ideas surely did not affect only the clergy; especially his proposition that learning should be an obligatory qualification for people occupying offices of power was widely applied by Alfred among his laity. For instance, as has been discussed above[104], Asser's chapter 106 records how the king forced his ealdormen and reeves to devote their time to self-education unless they wished to lose their judicial positions; and, in addition, Alfred himself perceived great responsibility in his role of a teacher and promoter of learning, causing him to devote himself to a vigorous study of Latin and divine wisdom. The acute resonance of Gregory's opinions may have been the reason why the king selected *Pastoral Care* as his earliest attempted translation. The style of Alfred's text is similar to that of Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Both authors wished that the message in their respective texts would affect as many people as possible, which, of course, required a language easily understood by any literate person. Clement comments on the particularities of the king's English and says: "Alfred undoubtedly desired his translation to be clear, concrete, and definite. [...] He insisted that the translation be a faithful rendition, and the vast majority of changes are those which facilitate clarity."[105]

Alfred starts the Preface with a nostalgic look into a prosperous and peaceful past, most probably the 7th century. He recalls the bygone happy times, *gesæliglica tida*, and *hwelce wiotan iu wæron giond Angelcynn* and *kyningas ðe ðone onwald hæfdon ðæs folces on ðam dagum Gode & his ærendwrecum hersumedon; & hie ægðer ge hiora sibbe ge hiora siodo ge hiora onweald innanbordes gehioldon*.[106] Alfred continues and writes that the past rulers *eac ut hiora eðel gerymdon; & hu him ða speow ægðer ge mid wige ge mid wisdom*, and also comments on the ecclesiastical orders, saying *eac ða godcundan hadas hu giorne hie wæron ægðer ge ymb lare ge ymb liornunga*.[107] In this passage, Alfred mentions the key concept of wisdom and qualifies it as a necessary possession of an Anglo-Saxon king. OED definition of *wisdom* as used and understood already in the 9th and 10th century is "knowledge (esp. of a high or abstruse kind); enlightenment, learning, erudition; in early use often = philosophy, science," or, a more general definition, "kinds

[103] Keynes and Lapidge 29.
[104] See p.39.
[105] Richard W. Clement, "The Production of the *Pastoral Care*: King Alfred and his Helpers," *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986) 137.
[106] Henry Sweet ed., *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care* (London: Early English Text Society, 1871) 1. Trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 124: "what men of learning [were found] throughout England"; "kings obeyed God and his messengers, and [...] they not only maintained their peace, morality and authority at home but also extended their territory outside."
[107] Sweet ed. 1. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 125: "succeeded both in warfare and in wisdom"; "sacred orders were eager [...] both in teaching and in learning."

of learning, branches of knowledge." The latter meaning is, for example, documented in Alfred's translation of Boethius: *Mine þeowas sindon wisdomas & cræftas & soðe welan*.[108]

Wisdom could be also used "as one of the manifestations of the divine nature in Jesus Christ" (OED). This meaning is obsolete nowadays, however, it is again evidenced in Alfred's *Consolation*: *Se wisdom mæg us eallunga ongitan swylce swylce we sint..forðæm se wisdom is God*.[109] As a result, a king as both the secular and spiritual leader of his people was in Alfred's eyes supposed to be "wise," which was rather than an inherent personality trait understood as an outcome of a diligent self-education resulting in certain "kinds of learning," possibly with the emphasis on the fields of "philosophy, science," but also quite possibly describing the divine nature of the earthly monarch whose actions and morality should be a "manifestation of the divine nature in Jesus Christ."

Alfred then proceeds to describe the contrastingly poor conditions of the 880s in which learning had drastically declined, especially in respect to Latin literacy. He writes:

> swæ *clæne hio wæs oðfeallenu on Angelcynne ðæt swiðe feawa wæron behionan Humbre ðe hiora ðeninga cuðen understondan on Englisc oððe furðum an ærenndgewrit of Lædene on Englisc areccean; ond ic wene ðætte noht monige begiondan Humbre næren. Swæ feawa hiora wæron ðæt ic furðum anne anlepne ne mæg geðencean be suðan Temese ða ða ic to rice feng*.[110]

Morrish considers Alfred's assessment of the level of learning as "excessively harsh"[111] and uses several points from the king's argumentation to prove it. Firstly, the passage above directly states that there were very few learned men in the area north of the Humber, south of the Humber, and south of the Thames, i.e. essentially on the whole island. However, this statement is based on Alfred's personal impressions only and thus cannot be considered an accurate assessment of the current situation. While the suggestion that the north of the Humber is void of learned men is introduced by *ic wene* "I suppose," the poor condition of learning south of the Thames is evidenced through the king's personal experience of not having encountered such men: *ic ... ne mæg geðencean*. Similarly, Alfred also applies a certain amount of generalization when describing the destructive consequences of the Viking raids on English churches and manuscripts. He

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[108] OED, Ælfred trans. *Consolation of Philosophy*, vii. §3. "My servants are wisdom and virtues and true wealth." (me)
[109] OED, Ælfred trans. *Consolation of Philosophy*., xli. §4. "Wisdom allows us to understand entirely as we are..because wisdom is God." (me)
[110] Sweet ed. 1; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 125: "[Learning] had declined so thoroughly in England that there were very few men on this side of the Humber who could understand their divine services in English, or even translate a single letter from Latin into English: and I suppose that there were not many beyond the Humber either. There were so few of them that I cannot recollect even a single one south of the Thames when I succeeded to the kingdom."
[111] Morrish 87.

recollect England *ær ðæm ðe hit eall forhergod wære ond forbærned, hu ða ciricean giond eall Angelcynn stodon maðma ond boca gefylðæ*.[112] However, the evidence of surviving manuscripts as well as the number of communities which either escaped or were restored after the attacks proves that Alfred again used exaggeration to stress his point. Morrish highlights the king's rhetoric skills which are demonstrated by the repeated emphatic phrases sw*æ clæne* / *swæ feawa* and *furðum an* / *furðum anne* in the first passage, or the hyperbolic use of *eall* and *gefylðæ* in the second passage.[113]

Nevertheless, Alfred's intentional inaccurate evaluation of the current situation surely helped him in emphasizing his main argument, i.e. that there is an urgent need for an educational and spiritual reform across the country. The king also reminds the bishops of the ephemeral and thus insignificant character of earthly riches, and asks them to revive their spirituality so that no further tribulations befall the kingdom: *Geðenc hwelc witu us þa becomon for ðisse worulde, þa þa we hit nohwæðer ne selfe ne lufedon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lifdon: ðone naman anne we lufodon ðætte we Cristene wæren, & swiðe feawa ða ðeawas*.[114] Considering that learning is the essential means of gaining knowledge, i.e. of acquiring "wisdom" in the secular OE sense, it may be easily deduced that it is also the king's obligation to devote his time to constant learning, in other words, to the pursue of wisdom.

By using the first person plural *we*, Alfred implies that all Anglo-Saxons, including himself, are accountable for the currently poor state of the kingdom, and thus he willingly steps down from his office of utmost power and joins his subjects as their equal. Alfred's proposed solution to the decline of learning and the resultant divine punishments was quite simple: *Forðy me ðyncð betre, [...] ðæt we eac suma bec, ða þe niedbeðyrfesta sien eallum monnum to witanne, ðæt we þa on ðæt geðeode wenden þe we ealle gecnawan mægen*[115]; and in times of peace, *ðætte eall sio gioguð þe nu is on Angel kynne friora monna, þara þe þa speda hæbben þæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to leornunga oðfæste, þa hwile þe hi to nanre oðerre note ne mægen, oð ðone first þe hie wel cunnen Englisc gewrit arædan*.[116] Latin was given a secondary importance

[112] Sweet ed. 2; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 125: "how – before everything was ransacked and burned – the churches throughout England stood filled with treasures and books."
[113] Morrish 90-91.
[114] Sweet ed.5; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 125: "Remember what punishments befell us in this world when we ourselves did not cherish learning nor transmit it to other men. We were Christians in name alone, and very few of us possessed Christian virtues."
[115] Sweet ed. 6; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 126: "Therefore it seems better to me – [...] – that we too should turn into the language that we can all understand certain books which are the most necessary for all men to know."
[116] Sweet ed. 6; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 126: "We [...] should turn into the language that we can all understand certain books which are the most necessary for all men to know"; "all the free-born young

and was to be taught only in case the young men wished to learn it after they mastered their native tongue.

As we know from the introductory chapters[117], by the late 9th century, English was commonly used also in its written form, especially in the secular spheres in documents dealing with land and property. Alfred's choice of the language was thus more or less clear; which, however, also meant that all books and treatises mentioned in the Preface had to be translated from Latin into English. As Kelly points out, "Alfred didn't initiate the use of vernacular writing in England; rather he attempted to enlarge the scope of books available in English in order to promote learning and philosophy and to improve the calibre of the nobility." The primary concern of the reform was not the establishment of English as the dominant language of the country, nor was it the desire to rule literate people who possessed the skill of reading and writing. These two effects were merely a bonus to the central aim of the whole scheme, i.e. to educate the people in terms of religious morality and values, transmitted through the selection of theological and didactic works. Consequently, a novelty befell Anglo-Saxon schools as they became furnished with a curriculum of Latin texts which were in their English form taught to laymen, most of whom did not even aspire to join the clergy.

3.4.2.2. Text Proper

While Chapters I and II insist on the proper instruction of anyone undertaking the education of others, mainly in holy orders where it is especially important not to be lead by a bad example, chapters III and IV focus on the qualities of a ruler and warn him against the traps of the office he represents. Chapter III discusses the "burden of teaching" and identifies the role of a teacher with that of a ruler and leader of people.[118] In Gregory's view, only a learned and wise person may become a secular ruler, as this position of power may be very deceitful and may corrupt even the most virtuous of men. The wide scope of meaning of the concept of "wisdom" is again discernible in Gregory's message; a "wise" person is thoroughly "learned" with the assistance of books and instructors, but also fully knowledgeable of Christian doctrines and values which he or she continually applies in practice, so that through their actions Christ's divine purity is manifested. When applied to the royal office, a ruler who is motivated by worldly riches and power will teach the same values to his people and the whole kingdom will be damned. Gregory applies the utmost authority of Christ as an example worthy to follow, pointing out that *forðæm se wealhstod self*

men now in England who have the means to apply themselves to it, may be set to learning (as long as they are not useful for some other employment) until the time they can read English writings properly."

[117] See 2.1.1. Language and Literacy, p.11.

[118] Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 127.

Godes & monna, ðæt is Crist, fleah eorðrice [eorþlic rice] to underfõnne. Se se þe ealne ðone wisdom ðæra uferrena gasta oferstigð & ær worlde ricsode on hefonum.[119] He did not refuse the rule because he thought there was a more worthy candidate, rather, *he wolde us ða bisene astella, ðæt we his to suiðe ne gitseden*.[120] Wisdom in its extreme form is thus directly linked with the judgments and actions performed by Christ and as he is the heavenly model of kingship for earthly rulers, so are his actions to be imitated by man who wishes to acquire wisdom.

Christ's moral lesson is focused on the states of prosperity and hardship; on the wickedness brought by the former and virtue elicited by the latter. He refused the kingly office so that *we, ðe his liomu sindon, leornedon æt him ðæt we flugen ða ollicunga ðisses middangeardes*[121] and warns against prosperity as the fertile soil for conceit and pride, while highlighting the purifying effect of tribulations. Gregory in Alfred's words explains:

> *On ðæm gesuntfulnessum ðæt mod wirð upahæfen; [...] On ðære gesuntfulnesse mon forgit his selfes; on ðæru geswincum he sceal hine selfne geðencean, ðeah he nylle. On ðære orsorgnesse oft þæt he to gode godyde he forlist; on ðæm earfeðum oft þæt he [longe] ær to yfle gedyde, he hit (om.) gebet. [...] Ac ðeah hine ðonne ða brocu getyn & gelæren, sona, gif he on rice becymð, for ðære weorðunge ðæs folces he bið on ofermetto awended, & gewunað to ðæm gilpe*.[122]

This passage must have had a strong impact on Alfred who, since his teenage years, had been inflicted with recurring periods of severe pain. As discussed above, prior to his acquaintance with Gregory's text, he had considered the illness to be God's punishment for his earthly desires, so he dedicated a considerable amount of time to personal devotion so that his suffering may be redeemed. In later years the king unknowingly traded his illness for a more severe pain which may have been regarded as God's next penalty for Alfred's inability to reduce his urges. However, accepting the notion of divine anointment and the resulting large-scale good deeds God may plan for the individual, Alfred's personal suffering may also be regarded as a divine gift which enabled him to remain a virtuous man while occupying the royal office. From the perspective of Gregory's text, Alfred may have experienced a gradual process of mental

[119] Sweet ed. 33; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 127: "for this very reason the mediator Himself of God and men, that is Christ, avoided undertaking earthly rule – He Himself who surpasses all wisdom of the higher spirits and ruled in Heaven before the world was created!"
[120] Sweet ed. 33; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 127: he wished to set an example so that we are not greedy for it."
[121] Sweet ed. 33; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 127: "we who are His limbs would learn from Him to shun the allurements of this earth."
[122] Sweet ed., 34; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 127-128: "In the midst of prosperity the mind is elated, and in prosperity a man forgets himself; in hardship he is forced to reflect on himself, even though he be unwilling. In prosperity a man often destroys the good he has done; amidst difficulties he often repairs what he long since did in the way of wickedness. [...] But even though afflictions teach and instruct him, if he acquire the kingdom, he immediately becomes perverted with pride at the people's reverence for him, and becomes accustomed to flattering praise."

preparation for his future royal role, and the severity of his illness could be perceived to escalate in accordance with the amount of power Alfred possessed at the times of inflictions.

Moving forward, chapter IV describes in detail the mechanism of moral deviation of which any ruler should be aware. The main cause of the ruler's corruption seems to lie in his *monifealde giemen*[123] which distract his mind from the constant realization of his actual purpose on earth and on the truly important aspects of his rule. Even the most righteous kings with the most pure intentions may unconsciously succumb to pride, given that they experience great achievements and their kingdom blossoms in welfare. Gregory writes, *oft ðonne hwæm gebyreð þæt he hwæt mærlices & wunderlices gedeð, & his ðonne wundriað ða þe him underðidde bioð, & hine heriað, ðonne ahefð he hine on his mode, & his Deman ierre fullice to him gecigð, ðeah þe he hit on yflum weorcum ne geopenige.*[124]

The conclusion, however, denies any interpretation in which the text may condemn great deeds or earthly power. If a man loses his battle with vanity and pride, the true cause of the defeat is to be found within his soul, not in any inherently evil nature of his position of authority. Therefore, it may be a good idea for a Christian leader who is uncertain of his ability to withstand temptations to abandon his rule and enter a monastery where his consciousness would not be distracted by terrestrial issues. On the other hand, kingship supported by divine authority provides the ruler with an excellent opportunity to perform great Christian works, which should not be renounced too hastily. King Alfred accepted this divine challenge; and through his bodily suffering keeping him constantly alert and aware of his Christian responsibilities as a king, he decided to improve the state of learning in his kingdom, as well as to elevate the position and authority of the Church.

3.4.3. Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*

Boethius (c.480-524/525) was one of the most influential medieval thinkers and his most famous work, the Latin text entitled *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, was widely translated and read during the Middle Ages. Boethius was born around the year 480 into a prominent Roman aristocratic family of Anicii. The exact period of his education and the identity of his tutors are not known; nevertheless, his unequivocal scholarly knowledge insured him with a significant political position at the royal court in 522. A year afterwards Boethius supported his one of his colleagues

[123] Sweet ed. 37; trans. Ingvar Carlson, *The Pastoral Care: Part 1* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1975) 74: "manifold cares."
[124] Sweet ed. 38; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Pastoral Care" 129: "often, when someone happens to do something great and glorious and those who are subject to him consequently magnify and praise him, then he becomes puffed up with pride and thoroughly calls down his Judge's anger upon himself, even though he does not show it in evil deeds."

who had been charged with treason; however, this act of loyalty did not help either of them. Boethius himself was charged with treason shortly afterwards, he was consequently arrested and spent one or two years of imprisonment in Pavia before his eventual execution in the 520s. The *Consolation* was composed during his time in the Pavia prison and its main ideas correspond to the preoccupations of a person currently dealing with a period of hardship. The literary character of Boethius argues that all earthly suffering has a higher purpose and that the world is ruled by a higher being whose essence is divine love and happiness. Rather than by gathering excessive amounts of wealth and power, these two qualities and thus also the approximation to the higher power are described as possible to reach through one's focus on and pursue of otherworldly virtues. Alfred's selection of this work seems to derive from his personal appreciation of the core message which has very much in common with the Christian concept of humility, stressing the eventual reward for terrestrial suffering on earth.

While the *Pastoral Care* represents Alfred's attempt at a literal translation, his OE *Consolation of Philosophy* was composed by a free translation method. The original Boethius's text was written during his imprisonment in the 6th century and it was conceived as a dialogue between himself and Lady Philosophy, both of whom were substituted by Alfred: Lady Philosophia changed into the personification of Wisdom, and the inquiring Boethius turned into an everyman and is represented by the inquirer's Mind. Although God and religion as such are not the focus of the Latin text, the concept of fate and divine providence surely assisted Alfred in his Christianity-related rendition. Similarly as other works participating in the educational reform, *Consolation* was also intended to be taught to laymen; therefore, many of Boethius's original complexities had to be dissolved and substituted by a literary style which would be easily understandable and most profitable to all Anglo-Saxon students. Alfred also made many original additions which give an insight into the type of mental preoccupations the king was dealing with in his later years. The final version of Alfred's translation is composed in a didactic form and offers a series of moral lessons which all good Christians should learn and follow.

Alfred's authorial additions are now to be discussed in some detail, clarifying the type of writer and thinker he was in the 890s and which lessons he considered as most crucial for his people. The core of Alfred's contemplations is still based on concerns expressed in Gregory's *Pastoral Care*; Alfred thus frequently muses on the dooming nature of earthly wealth and power if not approached with wisdom which encompasses both learning and knowledge but also a Christ-like mind of virtue and moral conduct. The Mind of the truth-seeker, possibly of Alfred himself, claims that he never desired earthly power; nevertheless, when the divine providence selected him to be the next king, his following actions reflected the intention to become a virtuous

ruler worthy of God's honour. Mind says, *me næfre seo gitsung ┐ seo gemægð þisses eorðlican anwealdes forwel ne licode, ne ic ealles forswiðe ne girnde þisses eorðlican rices, buton tola ic wilnode þeah ┐ andweorces to þā weorce þe me beboden was to wyrcanne; þæt was þæt ic unfracodlice ┐ gerisenlice mihte steoran ┐ reccan þonne anwald þe me befæst wæs*.[125] Alfred shows an awareness of the essential insignificance of terrestrial provisions and continues to question the nature of wisdom which is necessary for a wealthy and powerful man to pursue.

In chapter XXVII Wisdom speaks and helps Mind in its confusion over the wisdom's character and components: *Se Wisdom gedeð his lufiendas wise ┐ weorðe ┐ gemetfæste ┐ geþyldige ┐ rihtwise, ┐ ælces godes þeawes he gefyllð þone þe hine lufað*.[126] Within the scope of two sentences, wisdom in the sense of an inborn intelligence is now expanded to encompass all good virtues. The predisposition of wisdom is learning and knowledge; therefore, through this proposition Alfred reiterates the idea that education and the search for knowledge represent the gate to one's eventual development into a good and virtuous person. Alfred's own self-educational program not only improved his Latin communication skills and his general knowledge of Christian theology; it also attributed him with many praiseworthy qualities listed in the passage above. By reaching this stage of divine awareness, he also met Gregory's requirement and successfully qualified as an instructor of the people to whom he could start conveying the knowledge of the world he had acquired. Alfred envisaged both laity and the clergy, mainly his bishops and other subordinates who served as instructors or who occupied an office of power, to undergo the same personal development, i.e. to devote themselves to the study of the books he and his team had translated, to know their Christian duties and principles, to willingly continue searching for knowledge, and in effect to become good and virtuous people.

"Goodness" and what it means to be regarded "good" is another concept which is investigated within the dialogue. The human race is now divided into foolish people and those who strive for divine wisdom. The former group identifies power and prosperity as the highest good; the latter group, on the other hand, realizes that *þeah is an God, se is stemn ┐ staðol eallra goda*.[127] The discussed concept of goodness is complicated by the OE homographs *god* and *gōd*,

[125] Walter John Sedgefield ed., *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Oxford, 1899) 40. "Consolation of Philosophy," trans. and eds. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) 132: "desire for and possession of earthly power never pleased me overmuch, I did not unduly desire this earthly rule but nevertheless I wished for tools and resources for the task I was commanded to accomplish, which was that I should virtuously and worthily guide and direct the authority which was entrusted to me."

[126] Sedgefield ed. 62; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 133: "Wisdom renders those who love it wise and honourable and temperate and patient and just, and it fills him who loves it with every good quality."

[127] Sedgefield ed. 86; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 134: "there is only one God, who is the base and foundation of [...] all good men and all good things."

differing merely in their phonological value and referring to the adjective *good* and to the noun *God*. Although the words are etymologically unrelated, i.e. it cannot be assumed that the form referring to goodness derived from the title for deity or vice versa, their separate semantic loads may be perceived as influencing one another, especially when co-occurring in religious texts with a didactic purpose such as those of Alfred's scheme.

The independent etymological developments of *good* and *God* feature some interesting moments which reflect the socio-historical circumstances within the ever-changing Anglo-Saxon society. According to OED, *God* was formed from a Germanic base of unknown origin, similarly as its related cognates in different languages. It is important to note that during the OE period the word experienced a variation of gender; it could assume the qualities of either a strong neuter or a strong masculine noun. This alteration is most often explained through semantic motivation; the neuter variant seems to refer to one of the pagan gods, while the masculine form is understood as a "direct consequence of its adoption by the Church as a Christian term, in order to distinguish the personal Judaeo-Christian God from the impersonal pagan gods."[128] The OE word *gōd* is described as "a general adjective of commendation, implying that the thing described is of high or satisfactory quality, suitable for some purpose, or worthy of approval;"[129] a more concrete meaning is then created by the context in which the term is used. The most common OE opposite of *good* was *evil*, which implies a subsequent semantic specification of the latter word to the sphere of corrupted morality. The possible confusion of *god* and *gōd* was unintentionally resolved by the ME transcription of the long vowel [o:] as a double "oo", resulting in the form *good*.

Returning to Alfred's translation, Wisdom further specifies the divine origin of goodness by the application of the king's favourite nautical imagery, and says: *Þurg good God gesceop eal ðing, forðæm he wilt þurh hine selfne ealles þæs þe we ær cwædon ðæt good wære;* ⁊ *he is ana staðolfæst wealdend* ⁊ *stiora* ⁊ *steorroðer* ⁊ *helma, forðæm he riht* ⁊ *ræt eallú gesceaftum, swa swa good stiora anum scipe*.[130] This particular passage demonstrates the above mentioned doubling of vowels in order to stress the lengthy pronunciation and thus also resulting in the indication of the intended sense of the word. Nevertheless, the two concepts are here distinguished only formally; Alfred explicitly identifies one with the other and essentially equates God with the concept of goodness. The second part of the passage uses the metaphor of a ship and a steersman which appears very frequently in Alfred's texts, an example being his translation of Augustine's

[128] *god*, n. OED.
[129] *good*, adj. OED.
[130] Sedgefield ed. 97; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 134: "Through goodness God created all things, because He Himself rules everything which we said was good; and He alone is the steady ruler and steersman and rudder and helm, because He guides and governs all creation just as a good steersman guides a ship."

Soliloquia which is to be discussed later. Alfred seems to revert to the nautical imagery mainly in sections which he is unable to transfer into the English language, be it for the complexity of philosophical ideas or for their irrelevance to the king's intentions. Also, the seafaring activity is traditionally very familiar to the Anglo-Saxons, which makes it an ideal linguistic tool assisting in the transposition of thoughts encoded within the Latin texts to the English audience.

As stated above, in order to join God's flock and become a good and virtuous person, one has to search for wisdom and be willing to learn and study. For that purpose man was provided with the gift of intelligence which distinguishes people from animals and also from angels who possess *gewiss andget*, i.e. "pure reason."[131] In chapter XLI Alfred's Wisdom meditates on the hierarchy of beings differing by their ability to think, and expresses a deep disappointment over man's frequent decision to lower his status to that of mobile animals: *Ac þæt is earmlic þæt se mæsta dæl monna ne secð no þæt þæt him forgifen is, þæt is gesceadwisness; ne þæt ne secð þæt him ofer is, þæt is þæt englas habbað ┐ wise men; þæt is gewiss andget. Ac mest monna nu onhyreð nu neatú on þā þæt hi willniað woruldlusta swa swa netenu*.[132] Sadly, these people who surrender to their physical and greedy desires stop using their intelligence in the search for divine knowledge, and by abandoning wisdom in the Alfred's wider sense they also abandon all good virtues and qualities they may have possessed.

The circle of thought closes in chapter XLII in which God is identified with wisdom and virtue against which man cannot be measured: *His micelnesse ne mæg nan man ametan; nis þæt ðeah no licūlice to wenanne, ac gastlice, swa swa nu wisdom is ┐ rihtwisnes, forðæm he þæt is self.*[133] To apply this final metaphor to the initial argument of Alfred's translation, man needs to approach his earthly possessions and power with God in his heart, as without Him man quickly succumbs to their transitory appeal and evil takes over his soul. Thus, *we scoldon ealle mægene spyrian æfter Gode*[134], as Wisdom suggests; and through learning about God and the pursue of knowledge via his gift of intelligence, men may approximate the purity of God's nature, achieve the qualities of wisdom and goodness, and by becoming wise they would also become honourable, temperate, patient, and just. No longer would man doubt his perception of the world, but would understand everything with perfect intuition, as he also gains the attribute of pure

[131] Sedgefield ed. 146; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 135.
[132] Sedgefield ed. 146; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 135: "It is a pity that the great part of mankind does not seek after what is granted to them, namely intelligence, nor after what is above them, the possession of angels and wise men, namely pure reason. Rather, most men imitate animals in that they desire worldly pleasure as animals do."
[133] Sedgefield ed. 148; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 137: "No man can measure His magnitude: it is not in any case to be conceived corporeally but spiritually, as is wisdom and righteousness, because He is that Himself."
[134] Sedgefield ed. 147; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 136: "we must investigate God with all our might."

reason. Alfred's educational scheme is, therefore, both intellectual and ethical; he believed that by directing his laity and clergy to the search of knowledge, he also transforms their moral values.

3.4.4. Augustine's *Soliloquies*

St Augustine (354–430), also known as Augustine of Hippo, was a very influential early Christian thinker whose numerous works had a great impact on Western theology and Christianity. He was born into an upper class family in Roman Africa and during his youth he was leading a strongly hedonistic lifestyle, which caused his mother St Monica to pray for her son's remedy every day. In 386 he converted from Manichaeism to Christianity, several years later he was ordained a priest and utilized his learning of rhetoric in becoming a famous preacher, and in 430 he died as Bishop of Hippo. Augustine's treatise entitled *Soliloquia* is commonly dated to 386 or 387, and in a dialogue form it examines the difficulty of achieving self-knowledge and the knowledge of one's soul in general. The discussed issues of knowledge and learning about oneself surely played an important role in Alfred's selection of the text, especially when these concepts were confronted with the abstract uncertainty of faith and trust in God as a superior, all-controlling power which cannot be explained through knowledge only. Augustine's treatise provides a resolution for this clash of intellectual self-improvement and the simultaneous necessity of blind faith.

Alfred's renditions of the sixth–century Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and the fourth–century Augustine's *Soliloquies* represent his late literary endeavours and thus they both provide an insight into his current level of learning as well as his ideological preferences. In contrast to earlier translations, these two works present very complex philosophical ideas which only partially overlap with Alfred's focus on Christianity; Gatch describes Augustine's text as "a rigorous, largely dialectical or philosophical examination of questions concerning the soul [which is] more a philosophical than theological exercise."[135] The translator was thus challenged with major difficulties of transforming Latin concepts into more familiar notions while still retaining the original sense, which was further complicated by the essential need to make the ideas intellectually accessible to lay Anglo-Saxons. Thus, Alfred was again forced to apply the free translation method, and to use the original as a "point of departure for [his] reflections on the human soul, its immortality and its knowledge of God after death."[136] Book I and the initial part of Book II demonstrate Alfred's resolution to follow the core of the original, though still with

[135] Milton McC. Gatch, "King Alfred's Version of Augustine's Soliloquia: Some Suggestions on its Rationale and Unity," *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986) 21.
[136] Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 137.

some additions; the rest of Book II and the whole Book III, however, depart significantly from the Latin text, blending the ideas not only of Augustine but also Jerome, Gregory, or Boethius.[137]

Still intrigued by the concepts of wisdom and learning, Alfred continues to explore these notions also in Augustine's *Soliloquies*, expanding his previous ideas mainly through his contemplative additions to Book I. In one passage Alfred substitutes the original discussion of Stoicism and geometry with the more familiar nautical imagery and plunges into an examination of knowledge with the assistance of the new concept of "mind's eyes". Reason, assuming the role of a teacher, advises the inquirer:

> *For ðam þingum is ðearf þæt þu rihte hawie mid modes æagum to gode, swa rihte swa swa scipes ancerstreng byð aþenæd on gerihte fram ðam scype to ðam ancræ; and gefastna þa eagan þines modes on gode swa se ancer byd gefastnoð on ðære eorðam. þeah þæt scyp si ute on ðære sæ on þam ydum, hyt byð gesund and untoslegen, gyf se streng aþolað; forðam hys byd se oðer ende fast on þære corðan and se oðer on ðam scype.*[138]

Reason then reveals the "mind's eyes" to represent those metaphorical anchors fastened to God, which overlook the safety and direction of the ship symbolizing one's mind, and which consist of *gescæadwisnesse to æacan oðrum creftum*[139] ("reason, in addition to other virtues"), which are subsequently identified and whose purpose is also revealed: *wysdom and eadmeto and wærscype and gemetgung [and] rihtwisnes and mildheortnes [and] gesceadwisnis [and] gestaðþines and welwilnes [and] clennes and forheafdnes. Myd þisum ancrum þu scealt gefastnian ðone streng on Gode, þæt ðæt scyp healdan sceal þines modes*.[140] The word *craft* denotes a quite narrow circle of senses in PDE, namely "skill, art, skilled occupation." However, in Old English it was used for a much wider range of denotations; particular passage presents the meanings of "intellectual power; skill; art."[141] According to OED, the semantic specification of the word is exclusively English; cognates in other languages maintained the original meaning of "strength, force, power, virtue."

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[137] Keynes and Lapidge, "Consolation of Philosophy" 137.
[138] W. J. Sedgefield ed., *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899). Accessed via https://archive.org/details/kingalfreds00boetuoft: 22; "Soliloquies," eds. and trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) 140: "For these reasons it is essential that you look directly with your mind's eyes at God, just as directly as the ship's anchor-cable is stretched in a straight line from the ship to the anchor; and fix your mind's eyes on God as the anchor is fixed in the ground. Even though the ship is on the waves out at sea, it is safe and sound if the cable holds, because one of its ends is fixed in the ground and the other is fixed to the ship."
[139] Sedgefield ed. 22; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Soliloquies" 141.
[140] Sedgefield ed. 22; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, "Soliloquies" 141: "wisdom, humility, caution, moderation, justice, mercy, discretion, constancy, benevolence, chastity and temperance. With these anchors you should fix in God the cable so that it will hold the ship of your mind."
[141] *craft*, n. OED.

This section may have been inspired by Boethius's discussion of wisdom and the virtues and all good things it is composed of; moreover, both works stress the importance of seeking knowledge of God as the requirement of obtaining moral stability as well as wisdom and all the virtues of a good man. As Alfred's Boethius identifies God with wisdom, Alfred's Reason in *Soliloquies* associates God with truth, *soð*[142], and uses a metaphor of sunlight to further emphasize the life-giving and revitalizing quality of the knowledge of God: *Ac swa swa þeos gesewe sunne ures lichaman æagan onleoht, swa onliht se wisdom ures modes æagan, þæt ys, ure angyt; and swa-swa þæs lichaman æagan halren beoð, swa hy mare gefoð þæs leohtes þære sunnan. Swa hyd byð æac be þæs modes æagan, þæt is, andgit*.[143]

Apart from the ideological Christianization of the text, Alfred also modified its overall tone, and many of his additions, especially the choice of figurative language, also contribute to its friendlier connection with his Anglo-Saxon readership. Ruth Waterhouse's study closely examines Alfred's linguistic strategies to maximize the didacticism of the work and comments on the methodological variation of Augustine's and Alfred's didactic technique. Both texts use the dialogue format which is known to be an excellent rhetorical device for the educational intention; however, Alfred approached this format quite differently than his predecessor. As Waterhouse explains, Augustine leans towards the authority-based method also used by Wulfstan, i.e. "to thump the pulpit [...] and *tell* the audience what to think;" while Alfred prefers the style of Ælfric and "[seeks] to persuade the audience by appealing to their intellect or by seeking to move them subliminally, especially by rousing their emotions." As a result, the authority-figure and the seeker of knowledge in the king's rendition show a "more relaxed relationship [of] equals" which consequently "persuades [the audience] to emphasize with the participants and the complementary viewpoints they put forward."[144] This clever alteration of tone illustrates Alfred's personal humility and also his sensitivity to the needs of his people, modifying the original authoritative style of teaching into a more subtle and sensitive approach.

Alfred' use of questions, especially their expansion, helps to create a more intimate and relaxed relationship between the protagonists as well as between the writer and his audience. Waterhouse analyses the king's treatment of Latin interrogative sentences and finds several tendencies throughout the work. First, the original sentence modality remains unchanged but the

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[142] Sedgefield ed. 52.
[143] Sedgefield ed. 44. Keynes and Lapidge, "Soliloquies" 144: "Just as [the] visible sun illuminates the eyes of our body, so does wisdom illuminate the eyes of our mind, that is, our understanding; and just as the eyes of the body are healthier when they take in more of the sun's light, so it is with the mind's eyes, that is, the understanding."
[144] Ruth Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version of Augustine's *Soliloquies*," *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986) 60.

tone is shifted by an expansion of the sentence structure. Second, "overtones of politeness" could be deduced when a Latin interrogative sentence is modified into an OE declarative or imperative sentence with the modality of an indirect question, frequently introduced by main clauses such as *I wish to know* or *Tell me* respectively. The initial imperative may imply a stronger emphasis on the teacher-pupil relationship than in Latin; however, as Waterhouse explains, "functionally the command is not the main feature, and the dependent clauses that carry the indirect question are in context much less distancing than the Latin direct question."[145] For instance, the opening of the section I.9 depicts the original Reason asking two questions; Alfred's OE version, however, is initiated by a less aggressive plea, *Ac sege me hweðer*[146] ("But tell me whether"). The third method focuses on Alfred's preference of a statement, turning Latin questions into complex sentences in which the original question is carried within a declarative content clause introduced by a main clause such as *It seems to me* or *I hear*. For example, the Latin opening question in I.18 is transformed into *Ac ic wolde witan hwæðer*[147] ("But I wish to know whether").

The use of metaphors and analogies is another rhetorical device assisting Alfred in overcoming the cultural gap between the Latin text and his native Anglo-Saxon environment, creating in effect a more direct connection with his English audience. At one point Alfred compares God and his power to an earthly lord controlling his household, with both Alfred himself and his readers as the lord's dependents. The Latin text mentions another lord, presumably the devil, who is able to drive his dependents insane: *Deus qui nos munis. Deus qui nos in omnem veritatem inducis. Deus qui nobis omnia bona loqueris, nec insanos facis, nec a quoquam fieri sinis.*[148]; and the OE version admits that the speaker and the readers have all served this wrong lord: *Đu þe us gedydest þines hyredes, and þu þe us lerst ealle rihtwisnesse, and us simle good lerst and simle us good dest, and us ne forlæst unryhtum hlaforde ðeowian, swa we geo dydon*.[149] The intended meaning of *good* seems to be identical to that used in previously discussed texts, i.e. not only referring to generally satisfactory deeds and qualities of any kind, but also, more specifically, to divine virtues characteristic of God who is understood as the embodiment of goodness. The activity of "teaching" is mentioned twice in the second part of the passage, proclaiming God as both a "doer" of good and a "teacher" of good, implying thus also the necessity of all Christians to learn how to "do" good. The obligation to educate oneself is yet

[145] Waterhouse 55.
[146] Sedgefield ed. 60.
[147] Sedgefield ed. 73.
[148] Trans. Waterhouse 81, n.8: "God who fortifies us. God who leads us into all truth. God who speaks to us only good, who neither terrifies into madness nor suffers another to do so."
[149] Sedgefield ed. 52; trans. Waterhouse 81, n.9: "Thou who has made us of thy household, and thou who teachest us all righteousness, and always teachest us good, and always dost us good, and dost not leave us to serve an unrighteous lord, as we formerly did."

again revisited, which leads us again to the interrelated and interdependent concepts of learning, teaching, and (divine) wisdom as the ultimate goal. Waterhouse explains the significance of this passage from a more pragmatic perspective, highlighting the "translator's viewpoint" as the most interesting part of the textual changes in OE:

> Alfred like Augustine sees the relationship from the subordinate's position, but he equates *himself* with those who have served the unrighteous lord. As temporal and secular king, his taking this viewpoint in important for his relationship with his audience, since by identifying with them, he recognizes that, as they are subordinate to a temporal lord, so he is subordinate to a greater lord, God, and their experience is a shared one.[150]

This special relationship between the audience and the writer enables him to discuss more personal and crucial issues such as trust and belief in one's earthly lord and God himself. The most touching part of Alfred's translation is allegedly that in which the speaker admits he is ashamed of doubting God and Christ and he fears that he will again forget the knowledge of God he has just regained. This passage emphasizes the greater importance of belief as compared to knowledge regarding the truthfulness of the Scripture and the content of theological books; and while the Latin argumentation is a "dazzling display of dialectics"[151], Alfred stresses the utmost authority of the Bible and Church fathers. Due to their shared experience and the immediate intimacy of the speaker's confession, the audience are now also allowed to admit the same doubts and fears, and are more willing to accept the essential solution to this forgetfulness, i.e. a complete trust in the authority of their secular and spiritual leaders.

Alfred's didactic method proves highly effective as "by taking the position of the subordinate in the lord/*comitatus* relationship, [he] assists his audience to identify with him, and so persuades, rather them telling them the attitude they should adopt."[152] This gentle guidance and many of his viewpoints demonstrate the "wholesome goodness" of Alfred's own personality, which is further revealed by his concluding prayer in the Preface: "Here to be useful, and there [to heaven] to come." As Waterhouse notes, "his 'usefulness' is illustrated by this translation as such, but the way he has adapted the tone of the original to appeal to his audience gains for him a different accolade, that of our affection."[153]

[150] Waterhouse 50.
[151] Waterhouse 62.
[152] Waterhouse 63.
[153] Waterhouse 80.

3.5. Summary

Among all Anglo-Saxon rulers, King Alfred represents the most accurate example of a king-intellectual who, apart from his political and military agenda, also fully appreciates the domain of culture and learning and actively participates in its cultivation. He was also intensely aware of both the beauty and power of the written word, which he is documented to pursue both for pleasure and intellectual stimulation, but also for more practical reasons connected with the difficult political situation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms at the end of the 9th century. The truthfulness of the surviving historical accounts recording the king's thoroughly noble personality may be doubtful; nevertheless, the ninth-century educational and religious revival accompanied with the rise of the English language are some of the greatest proofs of Alfred's diligent activity promoting the improvement of the medieval English state of learning and religion.

Despite his necessary involvement in the fights against the Vikings, Alfred still managed to organize a team of scholars from various parts of Britain and the continent and with their assistance to attempt to avert the current development of the West Saxon kingdom. From his perspective, the degenerated morality of his people and the decline of religion were the major causes of the contemporary poor conditions of the country; the continual Viking invasions thus representing the just punishment ordered by the angered God. It may be assumed that Alfred did not consider himself a superior faultless being as compared to his subjects; rather, he himself accepted his own share of responsibility for the current tribulations and through his reformations he was transforming not only his subordinates but also his sinful royal self.

The choice of English, i.e. the West Saxon dialect, as the language of literature, didactic treatises, and also of oral instruction at public schools reflects Alfred's conscious awareness of the power of language to unite a society and to create a sense of togetherness among the people. Moreover, Latin texts were not understood by the majority of Anglo-Saxons with the exception of the ecclesiastical orders and certain members of the nobility; therefore, in order to transmit ideas through language, be it in its written or oral form, he was forced to use the language of everyday communication which was perfectly understood even by the commoners. Latin was still used in certain circles and taught as a second language, but the status of the dominant medium of communication was given to English.

For the religious revival Alfred selected several theoretical texts which he regarded as the most useful and relevant to the issues currently afflicting his people; this thesis focused on the ideas expressed in only a few, namely Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care,* Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, St Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and partly also Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Alfred's

novel curriculum composed of these particular works which were to be instructed to all enrolled students demonstrates his strong determination to revive the morality and proper Christian conduct across the whole kingdom, affecting the highest number of subjects he possibly could. The analysis of texts discovered that the most frequently recurring concepts which are repeatedly discussed within the OE translations are those of wisdom, learning, goodness, and the difficulty to know and follow God. The central and most burning issue seems to be the rejuvenating quality of knowledge as contrasted with the corrupting consequences of ignorance; Alfred puts a great emphasis on man's obligation to investigate God, to pursue knowledge and the so-called divine wisdom, to constantly educate oneself and not to feel too contended with one's terrestrial success, power, and wealth. Alfred's advice is simple and clearly stated: In order to walk on the path of righteousness leading to the gates of Heaven, it is necessary to dedicate one's time to learning about God and the true priorities in life, and to adjust one's actions and thoughts accordingly. Essentially, learning leads to wisdom, wisdom leads to goodness, and goodness leads to God.

4. ILLUSTRATING IMAGES: POST-ALFREDIAN PERIOD

4.1. Kings and Christianity

Whereas the Anglo-Saxon kings ruling from the 6th to the 9th century were dealing with the transition from the old to the new religion, kings of the 10th century onwards inherited a society with an already established ecclesiastical system and a stable basis of God's followers. Thanks to Alfred's educational reform, vernacular literacy and learning in general have greatly improved and later kings were able to take advantage of the noticeably widened net of literates allowing the transmission of written communication across the kingdom. As discussed above[154], the Christological perspective of the earthly rulership became preeminent throughout the society, connecting all actions of the king directly with God's will and stressing the intangible quality of royal decisions and decrees. In contrast to actions taken by kings of the previous era, post-Alfredian rulers demonstrated their faith mainly in the form of issued law-codes concentrating on ecclesiastical matters, donations of manuscripts or other valuable objects to monasteries, or through far-reaching projects reinforcing the impact of Christianity in the society.

4.1.1. Written Evidence: Law-codes

Regarding the field of jurisdiction, Alfred's active participation in its reinforcement was followed by most of the succeeding kings. His son, Edward the Elder (899-924), is known for two shorter law-codes and other texts dealing with the Danelaw and its inhabitants; however, rulers of the following period contributed to the English law-code more significantly. King Æthelstan (924-939) authored six codes, most of which focused on the issue of thievery and personal possession, as well as the rules for alms-giving ordinance. The chief interest of his decrees lies in their essentially homiletic framework, presenting the king as a preacher guiding the folk with the assistance of the issued law-codes to the road of salvation. This tradition was initiated by Moses, the earthly leader of the people of Israel, who presented the chosen people with the Law of Moses, also known as the Torah. The divine intervention in the formation of the ancient law-code, demonstrated by God's direct orders to Moses, is recorded in several passages in the Bible: (Exodus 17:14) "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.", (Exodus 24:4) "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.", or (Leviticus 26:46) "These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD

[154] See.2.3.2.Christ-centred kingship, p.23.

made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." In Deuteronomy 31:26 Moses says: "Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD."

Similarly as the Law of Moses, also the law-codes of medieval kings were considered to be supported by God who approved of the contents and whose divine authority was transferred onto the person of the terrestrial king who issued the codes. As Chaney notes, "God's law had royal sanction, and royal laws had divine sanction, as again the coalescence of religion and law is manifest. Sin and crime tend to be identified, since 'one setting himself against the laws of God and the king's invokes the wrath of both."[155] The sacral and secular spheres were not strictly distinguished, which enabled the earthly ruler to reinforce the implementation of his law by the support of God's divine authority. Furthermore, Æthelstan's half-brother and successor, Edmund (939-946), focused on law-codes dealing exclusively with ecclesiastical matters; and King Edgar (959-975), apart from his crucial role in the monastic reform, issued four law-codes of religious nature.

Edgar's son, Æthelred II (978-1016), emphasized the assumed inherent responsibility of the Anglo-Saxon king to represent Christ on earth in a famous declaration in his eighth law code: *forðam Cristen cyning is Cristes gespelia on Cristenre þeode; and he sceal Cristes abilgðe wrecan swiðe georne.*[156] The OE noun *gespelia* is commonly translated as "a substitute"[157] and its form was derived from the OE verb *spelian* defined in OED as "to take or stand in the place of (another); to represent." The role of a judge is thus transmitted from the heavenly king to the terrestrial ruler whose secular decrees correspond in their authority to those stated in the Scripture, which implies that following secular laws authored by the earthly king is comparable to one's following Christian doctrines essentially authored by God. In X Æthelred Preamble the king further recounts his political theory of rulership and states ways and methods of expanding the borders of Christianity which seemed most fruitful and effective to him:

> *Mearn to geminde oft ⁊ gelome, þe godcunde lara ⁊ wislice woroldlaga Cristendom fyrðriað ⁊ cynedom micliað, folce gefremiað ⁊ weorðscypes wealdað, sibbiað ⁊ sehtað ⁊ sace twæmað ⁊ þeode þeawa ealle gebetað.*[158]

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[155] Chaney 211.
[156] VIII Æthelred 2.1. Felix Liebermann, ed. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 Vols. (Halle, 1903–1916), Vol. 1, 263. Trans. by A. J. Robertson, "the Law of Ethelbert," *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925) 119: "A Christian king is Christ's deputy among Christian people and he must avenge with the utmost diligence offences against Christ."
[157] *spell, v.2* www.etymonline.com.
[158] X Æthelred 1 Liebermann. Robertson 131: "frequently and often it has come into my mind that sacred precepts and wise secular decrees promote Christianity and strengthen royal authority, further public interests

This passage well illustrates the responsibility of the aforementioned *Cristes gespelia* whose possible methods of fulfilling this informative and didactic purpose are considerably widened due to the unlimited power and authority of the person concerned. A *gespelia* from the common folk could substitute Christ on earth and attempt to spread Christianity among his fellow countrymen using oral communication; however, a monarch may afford to literary spread the word by the production of *wislice woroldlaga*, i.e. wise secular laws.

Æthelred's successor, King Cnut (1016-1035), although not of the West Saxon royal lineage or Anglo-Saxon origin, also continued to reinforce Christianity in the kingdom. His strategy, nevertheless, opposed that of Alfred and the direction of the ninth-century educational scheme which was based on the spread of documents written in English and considered the original Latin versions as not suitable for the teaching process of the common folk. Cnut, on the other hand, supported learning based on ecclesiastical texts composed in Latin and not necessarily translated into the vernacular. He is mainly known for two law-codes which, for instance, commanded all Christians to learn two religious texts in Latin which were to be recited during the Mass.

4.1.2. Visual Evidence: Portraits

In contrast to the pre-Alfredian period, the evidence of royal participation in the spread of Christian values and learning in general is provided not only by their direct or indirect authorship of written records, but also with the assistance of contemporary visual art, namely in the form of royal portraits which first started appearing in the 10th century. In the present thesis, the term "ruler portrait" refers to a painted image of a male ruler; similarly, "royal portrait" is a painting depicting either the ruler himself, or also particular members of the royal family, mostly the queen or the ruler's sons. Prior to this period there is no surviving image of English kings which could be regarded a proper "portrait"; the only surviving depictions are in the form of various types of coinage frequently displaying rough sketches of royal busts accompanied by Christian attributes. These miniature royal images were modelled on Byzantine and continental prototypes, presenting thus not portraits of individual kings in the modern sense of the word but rather idealized prototypes of their outer appearance.[159]

As Catherine E. Karkov notes, all in all there are "five surviving ruler portraits in manuscripts made by or for the Anglo-Saxons, and a further dozen or so portraits or possible

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and are the source of honour, bring about peace and reconciliation, put an end to strife and improve the whole character of the nation."

[159] Catherine E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004) 1.

portraits in other media."[160] The following analysis will be focused on ruler portraits found in medieval manuscripts, i.e. those surviving in excellent condition, and incorporated within larger bulks of text enriching the image with a further meaning and context. The examined portraits and manuscripts are:

(1) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 183, folio 1v[161]
    Æthelstan presenting St Cuthbert with *Lives of St Cuthbert* in verse and prose (fig. 2)
(2) London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A.viii, folio 2v[162]
    Edgar presenting the New Minster Charter to Christ (fig. 3)
(3) London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii, folio 2v[163]
    Edgar with Dunstan and Æthelwold holding the Rule of St Benedict (fig. 4)
(4) London, British Library, MS Stowe 944, folio 6r[164]
    Ælfgifu/Emma and Cnut presenting a golden cross to the New Minster (fig. 5)
(5) London, British Library, MS Add. 33241, folio 1v[165]
    Ælfgifu/Emma enthroned with her sons and receiving her book (fig. 9)

The spotlight of the upcoming chapter will thus be given to King Æthelstan, King Edgar, and Cnut the Great, all of whom will be accompanied by a female element represented by queen Emma/Ælfgifu and a brief mention of her sons and future rulers, Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor. All portraits and manuscripts involved will provide an additional perspective of the Anglo-Saxon ruler's role of an author and supporter of written documents; the historical point of departure was constituted by Alfred's literary and educational endeavours from which the subsequent kings then proceeded. The aforementioned rulers devised individual approaches to Alfred's intellectual heritage which are deducible from the examination of the contemporary visual arts and surviving written evidence recording their actions during the respective periods of their reign.

4.2. King Æthelstan

4.2.1 Historical Background

Æthelstan's (924-939) enthusiasm for learning may have been triggered externally by its practical benefit, or by the example of his grandfather Alfred, or he himself could have internally sensed

[160] Karkov 3.
[161] Hereon referred to as CCC MS 183.
[162] Hereon referred to as Cotton Vespasian.
[163] Hereon referred to as Cotton Tiberius.
[164] Hereon referred to as MS Stowe 944.
[165] Hereon referred to as MS Add. 33241.

his personal responsibility as a king to improve the intellectual and religious standard of his subordinates. Be that as it may, Æthelstan's active participation in the spread of learning was frequently appreciated by his contemporaries, who in effect provided us with substantial evidence of the ruler's own learning, his educative activities, and also his reputation both within and from without the kingdom's boundaries. An acrostic poem, presumably written by John the Old Saxon, refers to him as one "more abundantly endowed with the holy eminence of 'learning'" which is offered by Michael Lapidge as a tentative translation of one of the original Latin lines, *Amplius amplificare sacra sophismatis arcE*.[166]

John the Old Saxon, eventually the abbot of the monastery of Athelney, belonged to Alfred's circle of foreign scholars invited by the king to England; however, he was born in the Old Saxony, i.e. the original continental homeland of Saxons in the today's Germany. Considering that John's poem could be dated to the 890s, at which time the king-to be was only a few years old, the poet did not describe Æthelstan's current skills and abilities, but rather predicted his future qualities and didactic ambitions, well in accord with Alfred's educational program currently under progress. In fact, Æthelstan was most probably educated in one of the reformatory schools established by his grandfather, leaving with a thorough knowledge of the religious theories encompassed in Alfred's "books most necessary for all men to know". As other young men who attended this type of school, also Alfred's grandson must have been acquainted with the assumed tragic consequences of intellectual and theological ignorance, and also with the ideal of a righteous and learned king ruling a good Christian people, which was thought to bring peace and prosperity to the whole kingdom.

Æthelstan's acquired wisdom and ruling ability was also commented upon by William of Malmesbury, one of the most important historians of the medieval era. He was born around 1095 in Wiltshire to a Norman father and an English mother, and while working as a Benedictine monk in the library of Malmesbury Abbey, he became intrigued with history. It is agreed that he wrote not only with the intention to inform but also for moral and didactic purposes, which he shared with earlier historians including Bede. Some of his work includes *De Gestis regum Anglorum (Deeds of the Kings of England*), first published in 1125, or *Historia novella (New History*) which is a continuation of the earlier *Gesta regum* up to 1142. As to Æthelstan's ruling competence,

[166] Michael Lapidge, "Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Æthelstan," *Anglo-Saxon England 9* (1983) 61-62. For a profound analysis of the poem see Lapidge, 61-98; or Simon Keynes, "King Æthelstan's Books," *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 143-201.

William expressed the current belief that *de hoc rege non invalida apud Anglos fama seritur, quod nemo legalius vel litteratius rempublicam administraverit.*[167]

The king's support and love of learning is evidenced by his wide collection of manuscripts mainly imported from the continent. Many of these works, enriched by new inscriptions and images, were then donated to numerous monasteries across the kingdom. Although the majority of manuscripts originally owned by Æthelstan were written outside of Wessex and they do not provide any substantial evidence as to the state of learning in the Anglo-Saxon England, the king's added inscriptions and pictures reveal his positive attitude towards religion and the English Church, as well as his eagerness to continue in the legacy set by his ancestors and to accept his royal role of the guide and teacher of his people. As Keynes sums up the king's intentions, "[Æthelstan's inscriptions and other additions] demonstrate the importance of [his] reign in the continuing process of the revival of religion and learning initiated by Alfred and brought to fruition by King Edgar."[168]

In comparison to Alfred's active contribution to the revival of learning and the spread of Christian values, Æthelstan's participation in the same sphere consisted more of a passive supervision and distribution of educative material rather than in their creative composition. Also, while Alfred's strategy was to personally provide his clergy and laity with translations from Latin to English and thus to form a genuinely English cultural tradition, Æthelstan decided rather to collect and to commission the production of various learned texts and manuscripts, and to distribute them across his kingdom and even further. His method of using written documents was not authorial; instead, the king and his helpers used inscriptions and visual images which they inserted onto blank pages of older manuscripts or within new manuscripts made of already existing texts.

Through these additions Æthelstan inserted his own person within the company of venerated saints and admirable rulers from the Anglo-Saxon history to which the individual manuscripts were dedicated; and, simultaneously, through the images the king expressed his conscious willingness to be a part of this tradition by serving God and representing a good Christian king. This strategy of enforcing the royal presence onto the reader has another interesting impact, i.e. that it served to bridge the temporal gap between the past periods in which the texts and the historical figures appeared with the king's own present time and his persona. As a result, all these visual and textual bridges across different periods of the Anglo-Saxon history

[167] William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, Sec. 132; trans. Whitelock (1968) 278-9: "Concerning this king, a firm opinion is current among the English, that no one more just or learned administered the State."
[168] Keynes, "King Æthelstan's Books" 147. Also see Lapidge, "Some Latin Poems" 93.

which were presented to the recipient of the book served as a means to create a strong sense of unity among all of the king's subjects, regardless of their origin and place of living. This sense of shared history and values then consequently induces a feeling of trust in the authority of the current king who is presented as following the footsteps of his admirable predecessors.

In the particular case of King Æthelstan, he was well aware of this power of books and used his gained knowledge in the northern kingdoms in the formation of CCC MS 183. In order to better understand the king's intentions, it is important to note that he was born in Wessex but raised in the kingdom of Mercia, which provided him with a good sensitivity to the inter-kingdom relations and also to the appropriate methods of either establishing a closer connection across the boundary or separating the nations even further. The CCC MS 183 in particular demonstrates the respect and reputation of St Cuthbert of which Æthelstan was aware, considering he had spent most of his childhood in the northern parts of the island. Thus, the educational purpose of the king's commission and presentation of the manuscript is well blended within his political agenda in the north, i.e. the attempt to reinforce Æthelstan's royal authority in more distanced areas outside of Wessex.

Nevertheless, the desired link between the past and the present is most apparent in visual arts which enabled the artists to show figures of different periods and realities within a single scene, interacting with one another and thus forming a very personal relationship, otherwise impossible to achieve in the real world. Æthelstan's only surviving portrait well demonstrates this method; the depicted juxtaposition of the king and St Cuthbert creates several profitable links with the Anglo-Saxon history and its heroes, placing the king into a very favourable light. Firstly, purely by the shared presence with the saint, the king is associated with his holiness and purity, which is reinforced by the composition of the scene in which they are portrayed. Secondly, the figure of St Cuthbert links Æthelstan with King Alfred who was allegedly a recipient of the saint's miraculous help at the battle of Edington in 878. The last implied connection is temporal; the direct interaction between the two figures overcomes the temporal gap between the king's 10th century and the saint's 7th century which was widely regarded a golden time of the Anglo-Saxon history and highly admired by Bede or Alfred himself.

Several passages from *Historia Ecclesiastica* vividly celebrate St Cuthbert's time and his personal virtues, which in effect provides us with a possible explanation of the reasons behind the widespread appraisal of both the 7th century and the saint. As stated above, the most immediate but also superficial explanation of Æthelstan's specific choice of St Cuthbert's community as the receiver of the king's donation act was his knowledge of the currently widespread cult of the saint in the northern parts of the island, and thus an explicit act of royal veneration would result in a the

reinforcement of the king's authority even in these remote areas. However, a more profound understanding of the reasons of the saint's veneration is also necessary as it gives an insight into the tenth-century perception of the current period as opposed to St Cuthbert's 7th century, as well as between the personality of the king as opposed to that of the saint.

As to the prosperity and high level of learning of the 7th century kingdoms, chapter IV of the *Ecclesicatical History* recounts:

> *Neque umquam prorsus, ex quo Brittaniam petierunt Angli, feliciora fuere tempora; dum et fortissimos Christianosque habentes reges cunctis barbaris nationibus essent terrori, et omnium uota ad nuper audita caelestis regni gaudia penderent, et quicumque lectionibus sacris cuperent erudiri, haberent in promtu magistros, qui docerent*.[169]

Bede also describes Cuthbert's modest life of virtue in a smaller monastic community prior to his appointment as Bishop of Lindisfarne but he mainly focuses on his behaviour after this event. Bede mentions all the unique qualities of the saint, stressing the purity of his virtues and the immense benefit of the common Anglo-Saxons who approached Cuthbert as their spiritual guide in times of struggle:

> *Cuthbertus eidem monasterio factus præpositus plures et auctoritate magistri et exemplo suæ actionis regularem instituebat ad vitam. Nec solum ipsi monasterio regularis vitæ monita simul et exempla præbebat, sed et vulgus circumpositum longe lateque a vita stultæ consuetudinis ad cælestium gaudiorum convertere curabat amorem. [...] crebro ipse de monasterio circumpositas veniebat ad villas, et viam veritatis prædicabat errantibus. Cuthberto tanta erat dicendi peritia, tantus amor persuadendi, quæ cæperat, tale vultus angelici lumen, ut nullus præsentium latebras ei sui cordis celare præsumeret; quin omnes palam, quæ gesserant, confitendo proferrent, quia nimirum hæc eadem illum latere nullo modo putabant; et confessa dignis, ut imperabat, pœnitentiæ fructibus abstergerent.* [170]

The later widespread veneration of St Cuthbert and the cult of this saint may be explained through this particular quality he had shown in real life, i.e. his ability to perceive genuine intentions of an individual, be that good or bad, and consequently to either assist in the moral remedy of the sinner

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[169] *EH* IV, 2. Jane: "Nor were there ever happier times since the English came into Britain; for their kings, being brave men and good Christians, they were a terror to all barbarous nations, and the minds of all men were bent upon the joys of the heavenly kingdom of which they had just heard; and all who desired to be instructed in sacred reading had masters at hand to teach them."

[170] *EH* IV, 27. Jane: "Cuthbert was placed over that monastery, where he instructed many in regular life, both by the authority of a master, and the example of his own behaviour. Nor did he afford admonitions and an example of a regular life to his monastery alone, but endeavoured to convert the people round - about far and near from the life of foolish custom, to the love of heavenly joys [...] He often went out of the monastery and repaired to the neighbouring towns, where he preached the way of truth to such as were gone astray. Cuthbert was so skilful an orator so fond was he of enforcing his subject, and such a brightness appeared in his angelic face, that no man present presumed to conceal from him the most hidden secrets of his heart, but all openly confessed what they had done; because they thought the same guilt could not be concealed from him, and wiped off the guilt of what they had so confessed with worthy fruits of penance, as he commanded."

or to appreciate the moral purity of a righteous person. Therefore, the later Anglo-Saxon rulers' direct references and public adoration of St Cuthbert and donations to his community could suggest their assumedly virtuous character which need not be hidden from the saint's all-seeing penetrating gaze. This moral chastity would consequently defend the king's current ruling position and approve of their royal actions.

4.2.2. CCC MS 183

4.2.2.1. Textual Composition

CCC MS 183, the manuscript in which Æthelstan's portrait is to be found, is the only one having been produced in Wessex and commissioned by the king himself for its presentation to St Cuthbert's community at Chester-le-Street. This purpose is clearly declared by its structure and composition, as well as by the iconographical features of the king's portrait which was inserted onto the originally blank verso of the opening folio. The bulk of the quire consists of texts celebrating the life and miracles of St Cuthbert. Opposite to the donation scene there is Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* in prose (2r-56r) which is followed by excerpts from the *Ecclesiastical History* offering accounts of the saint's posthumous miracles (56r-58r). Prior to Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* in verse (71r-92v) there is a section composed of varied material of miscellaneous nature, such as regnal lists and royal genealogies, lists of popes and Christ's disciples, number of bones in the human body, or the structure and dimensions of St Peter's cathedral. These seemingly unrelated secular texts play an important role in the overall structure of the manuscript; each providing a certain kind of microcosm of the world: the detailed structure of the human being, the detailed structure of the key religious foundation in England, or the detailed structure of the "chosen" royal lineage currently ruling the kingdom. The combination of these individual parts of existence then creates a macrocosm of life which is happening in real time and which is now elevated to the sphere of eternity through the donation of the book to the saint.

4.2.2.2. Frontispiece

The CCC MS 183 image of Æthelstan (fig. 2) stands for the earliest surviving portrait of an Anglo-Saxon king. The drawing depicts the two figures of King Æthelstan and St Cuthbert positioned next to one another, the saint on the right side of the image, the king on the left side. The saint is standing in front of his church, he is shown with a halo, and his head is slightly turned in the direction of the king at whom his eyes are fixed. His left hand is holding a closed book, and his right hand is raised and open-palmed as he is most probably accepting the king's gift and prayers and is giving him blessings. Æthelstan's figure is placed beneath an arch and in both

hands he is holding an open book, most probably symbolizing the donated manuscript, which he is presenting to the saint.

His head is bowed down as if he was reading the open book; however, this composition obviously suggests an expression of deep veneration rather than any kind of self-education or reading in the presence of the saint. The attribute of an open book may also suggest an act of its creative production by the person holding it, as in the early eighth-century portrait of the evangelist Matthew (fig. 10) preserved in the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D.iv, fol. 25v). This image presents a sitting figure of the evangelist, clearly holding a writing tool which he uses for the composition of the text; however, the CCC MS 183 picture lacks this type of composition and active gestures, and instead presents various attributes usually associated with the contemplative act of donation (two figures facing one another, the donor's expressed humility, the receiver's gesture of the gift's acceptance).

The CCC MS 183 scene could be also perceived as Æthelstan's personal vision of an imagined meeting with St Cuthbert, in which the ruler expresses his deep admiration for the saint who in turn accepts the king through his blessings as a rightful and worthy ruler who properly serves the only God and who justly deserves all his earthly possessions and power. Apart from the donation object itself being presented to the saint, the king's adoration and his open confession of adherence to the cult of St Cuthbert are further evidenced by the positioning of both their figures. While the saint's feet are placed at the topmost stair surrounding his church, the king is standing one stair below the level of the saint. This detail is a significant iconographic indication of the ruler's inferiority, both in the physical and abstract sense, referring to the king's sensed subordination to the noble figure of the saint.

The portrait also displays a balanced relationship between the king's and the saint's respective spheres of earthly and heavenly kingdoms. The heavenly sphere is represented by the saint standing in front of a church; the secular architecture behind Æthelstan refers to the earthly world in which the king represents the saint's human substitute whose role is to continue Cuthbert's legacy. This interpretation also supports the previously mentioned claim that the portrayed scene shows the king's imagined vision of himself in the company of the saint who is approving of the ruler's character and earthly deeds. Moreover, whereas the saint's status is set by the divine halo above him, the significance of the king's position is shown by his royal crown symbolizing the utmost terrestrial office of power he currently occupies.

The whole scene is framed by separate panels filled with the motif of inhabited vine-scroll which was traditionally linked to the tree of life and, as Gannon notes, is naturally emblematic of

Jesus' words in John 15:1-8 "I am the true vine".[171] The figures of Æthelstan and Cuthbert are thus enclosed by this blossoming eternal framework representing Paradise and the salvation of the human soul; but also, to be more specific, a place "in which", as Karkov writes, "the king's devotion was given and received by Cuthbert and his community, as well as the paradise that their collective prayers would hopefully help the king to attain."[172] Truly, the salvation of the king's soul was another important reason of the production and donation of the manuscript. Through the additions of Æthelstan's image, the king is inserted into the manuscript otherwise dedicated to the saint, and thus hereafter dwells in the company of an already saved and highly venerated individual. Moreover, it is possible that this highly valuable and decorated work was to be deposited inside the crypt where the relics of the saint were deposited, which would also increase the king's chances for salvation.

Therefore, as has been discussed above, the composition and attributes featuring in this portrait demonstrate the artistic effect of bridging wide temporal and dimensional gaps. In this particular portrait, King Æthelstan and St Cuthbert are depicted inhabiting different yet united spatial areas which could be understood as the opposition of court and church, or even of earthly and heavenly kingdoms. Their direct connection is further strengthened by the nature of the event portrayed, i.e. the reciprocal action of the donor's giving a book which is accepted by the receiver, and in turn the receiver's giving a blessing which is then accepted by the donor. This reciprocity implies mutual understanding and sympathy shared between the participants, suggesting the king's genuine devotion and admiration of the saint and all he represents, which is evidenced by the saint's acceptance of the king's gift and his gesture of benediction. The portrait's bridging effect of linking the sacral and secular spheres is further emphasized by the identical event occurring in the external reality, i.e. the actual presentation of the manuscript by the king to the monastery of Chester-le-Street, and also by the essentially permanent nature of both the material portrait and the manuscript which guaranteed the bridging impression to last hopefully forever.

Carolingian art undoubtedly had a great impact on the final composition and iconography of Æthelstan's portrait; however, the image is not completely and in all aspects dependent on the cultural and artistic tradition of medieval Francia. The main reason explaining the different emphasis of Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon iconography lies in the various developments and obstacles that Christianity had to overcome in each country. The continental progress was fairly smooth, which enabled the Carolingian rulers to regard themselves the earthly embodiment of Christ from early stages of the process, resulting in frequent ruler portraits using the iconography

[171] Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 177.
[172] Karkov 63.

typical for depicting Christ, i.e. enthroned and in Majesty. On the other hand, the natural spread of Christianity in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was often interrupted by foreign invasions, mainly by the pagan Vikings. These power-struggles resulted in the Anglo-Saxon kings' need to repeatedly assert their claim to the throne by proving their ascendency and continuing royal lineage. This strategy was reflected in the contemporary iconography; the Anglo-Saxon rulers are not usually portrayed in the position of enthroned Christ but rather in the company of venerated figures symbolic of the prosperous Anglo-Saxon world. For Æthelstan in particular, his portrait with St Cuthbert linked him with the saint who was currently widely admired in the kingdom, which consequently strengthened his royal authority among his subjects.

In addition, as Karkov points out, "Carolingian rulers are shown receiving books, but rarely if ever donating them, and the portrait of Æthelstan alters the imagery of its 'imperial sources' to suit both the nature and contents of the manuscript in which it appears, and the specifically English concerns of both that manuscript and the king for whom it was made."[173] These specifically English concerns could be derived from the legacy of King Alfred whose educational and religious reform went hand in hand, stressing the inter-relation of both and their crucial role in the well-being of the whole nation. Due to this legacy and the damaging effect of Viking raids, the subsequent kings placed an emphasis on the cultivation of learning, production of written works and other art promoting religion and knowledge as such, as well as the constant need to reform the Church. Therefore, the above mentioned special features characterizing the English cultural tradition could be summed up as an accented emphasis on learning, knowledge, and texts in general, as well as the patronage of religion, saintly figures, and the Church as such.

4.2.3. Cotton Otho B

King Æthelstan's other portrait also displayed a book as the central attribute and its composition and iconography largely resembled that of the CCC MS 183 image. This other portrait was originally inserted into BL Cotton Otho B. ix, a gospel-book from the continent, dated to either late 9th or early 10th century and donated to the community of St Cuthbert's at Chester-le-Street probably in 934. Due to the striking similarity of theme and composition, it is highly probable that the two portraits could have been created by the same artist or at least in the same ecclesiastical centre. The gospel-book was very badly damaged in two fires in the 18th and 19th century, the portrait was consequently either lost or burnt, and fragments of only about twelve pages are said to have survived.[174] However, both the text and the image can be reconstructed through other

[173] Karkov 55-56.
[174] Keynes, "Keynes, "King Æthelstan's Books" 171.

documents composed prior to the fire; for instance, Keynes presents a reconstruction of the portrait based on Tomas Smith's catalogue of the Cotton library from 1696 and Humphrey Walney's catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts: "Æthelstan, on bended knee, was shown crowned, offering the book to St Cuthbert with his right hand and holding a sceptre in his left hand; Cuthbert, seated in his church, was shown with a halo, giving the blessing with his right hand and holding a book in his left hand."[175]

Karkov observes that this lost portrait is more similar to the Carolingian iconography models which could be represented by the two-page miniature of Charles the Bald (fig. 12) in his prayerbook (Munich, Residenz, Schatzkammer, fols. 38v-39r). In contrast to more typical examples of Carolingian ruler portraits, Charles's image lacks iconographic symbols of an exaggerated other-worldly power and confidence; instead, he is portrayed in the humble position of *proskynesis*, i.e. kneeling in front of the deity. This respectful position is caused by the purpose of the image suggested by its location. The miniature is placed within the king's personal prayerbook and thus not meant to be scrutinized by the public eye; therefore, it did not strive to induce a feeling of subordination and respect within its viewers. Instead, the purpose of Charles's image is more personal; the king is frozen in this subordinate position within the pages of his own prayerbook, which enabled him to figuratively pray and to be constantly humble to God at all times.

In the 10th or 11th century the Cotton Otho gospel-book was extended by two textual additions which reflected the contemporary gradual influence of the Christological view of kingship, comparing the royal figure with that of the all-knowing and righteous God. The first OE text was an additional record of the king's gift of the gospel book to the St Cuthbert community which specified the terms and conditions of the king's gift, stated that it shall not be removed from its current location at St Cuthbert's, and also vividly proclaiming the punishment for breaking the king's order:

> *Gif þonne hwelc monn to þæm dyrstig beo . þæt he þisses hwæt breoce oððe wende · beo he scyldig wiþ God ⁊ wiþ men · ⁊ dæl neomende Iudases hletes Scariothes, ⁊ on Domes dæge þæs egeslican cwides to geheranne ⁊ to onfone · discedite a me maledicti in ignem æternum et reliq.*"[176]

The hortatory tone of this passage as well as the inclusion of the quote from the Bible further reinforces the already presumed but still continually reasserted Christ-like perception of the

[175] Keynes, "Keynes, "King Æthelstan's Books" 174.
[176] A. J. Robertson ed. and trans., *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) 48-49:"If anyone is so presumptuous as to violate or change this in any particular, he shall incur the wrath of both God and of men, and shall participate in the fate of Judas Iscariot, and on the Day of Judgment shall hear and receive the dread sentence, 'Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, etc.'"

earthly king, providing thus the manuscript with an almost holy character similar to that of a relic. The treatment of the book is strictly directed by the king's orders whose authority is supported by God's direct approval. This divine nature of the ruler's decrees is reflected in the biblical style of this particular passage which is used despite the fact that it deals with the exclusively secular issue of punishment for the disobedience of the king.

4.3. King Edgar

4.3.1 Historical Background

Only a few of Anglo-Saxon kings could pride themselves with such a favourable contemporary reputation as King Edgar (959-975). His image of a wise Christian ruler was a combination of the resulting impression of his royal decrees and also of the carefully thought-out construct created by his close associate and friend Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (963-984). From a certain perspective, this cooperation reminds us of the earlier relationship between King Alfred and Asser who also had a large share in the king's outward presentation as a noble, good, and wise ruler who was thoroughly absorbed in his earthly mission of the revival of Christianity and knowledge in the Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, our surviving evidence documents that it was the king who was the formative and proactive element of the ninth-century religious and educational reform, his ecclesiastical friends including Asser were merely his tools and intellectual assistants in his own innovative plans. In contrast, in the 10th century, this authorial creative role seems to have been transposed onto the ecclesiastical figures, giving the king the role of a supportive mechanism for the reconstruction in progress, consisting mainly of providing the necessary authority for its implementation in practice.

There are two surviving portraits of King Edgar; one serving as the frontispiece to the New Minster Charter (London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A.viii, folio 2v), the other accompanying the *Regularis Concordia* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii, folio 2v). It has been suggested that both of these texts and the designs of the king's pictures were created by Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (963 to 984), who through his scholarly and imaginative skills managed to produce an image of the ruler as a "deeply pious king with a zeal for monastic reform who, because of his virtue, is also a wise and powerful ruler."[177] Edgar's royal responsibilities and habits inherited from his predecessors doubtless include an interest in the Anglo-Saxon history and following the legacy of past kings. As will be demonstrated later, both through words and images, Edgar is frequently linked with the qualities of King Alfred, as well as of Edward or Æthelstan. In addition, the Christological view of kingship, which was

[177] Karkov 84.

introduced during Alfred's reign and further strengthened by Æthelstan, fully developed under Edgar who is in both portraits depicted as a saintly figure in direct connection with the heavenly kingdom. As Karkov also claims, "visually it is the frontispiece to the New Minster Charter that establishes the image of King Edgar that was to remain so influential throughout his reign and beyond."[178]

The core motives and benefits behind Edgar's monastic reform could be compared to Alfred's case and his decision to revive religion and learning. However, whereas Alfred's scheme was largely caused by his inner priorities and predispositions, Edgar's activity was, to a certain extent, predestined by an already established convention of the West Saxon rulers to personally participate in the innovation of the current state of devotion and learning of the people. Therefore, the ninth-century ruler was the major figure who controlled and organized the process and methods of the revival, and who on his own initiative invited scholars from near and far to assist him in the procedure. Edgar, on the other hand, had the advantage of looking into the past and viewing the models of royal intervention and devotion in the Anglo-Saxon England; moreover, learned scholars and ecclesiastics were already present at the royal court, and the initial stages of the monastic reform were well prepared at the time of his succession to the throne. Thus, considering the legacy of Edgar's predecessors and his inherited helpers, it can be argued that the monastic reform was yet another form of the Anglo-Saxon royal need to reinstate the importance of religion and education within the society, which was then traditionally performed through the support and education of the clergy as well as the appeal to the shared sense of unity of the common people. Reynolds agrees with this assumption and she claims:

> The real effect of church reform on lay society was not to undermine lay loyalties but to spread knowledge of Christianity, increase fervour, and improve education. Kings profited from the growth of literacy and the developments in law and government which ensued from it. Whenever a king maintained or increased his authority over legislation and law-enforcement his subjects would tend to feel themselves to be a people: being under a single law meant being a people.[179]

There were three main figures in the centre of the monastic reform who were in charge of its execution, namely Dunstan, Æthelwold, and Oswald. John discusses the character and degree of each of these monks' contribution and notes: "Dunstan belongs rather with the great clerical statesmen such as Aelfheah and Oda, the men who by their influence at court and their reputation for sanctity prepared the way for the experienced monks, Oswald and Aethelwold, who actually

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[178] Karkov 84.

179 Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 261.

effected the revival."[180] Dunstan's journey at the Anglo-Saxon court was perhaps the most turbulent. King Edmund sent Dunstan into exile but then he was summoned back and appointed Abbot of Glastonbury, allegedly because he miraculously saved the king's life on a hunting trip. During his exile on the continent, Dunstan became acquainted with monastic reforms, mainly of Gorze Abbey and the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny, which he later utilized in the Anglo-Saxon monastic reformation. King Eadred's mother greatly admired both Dunstan and Æthelwold who were thus in frequent contact also with her son who subsequently established Dunstan his principle advisor. Eadred's two nephews, Eadwig and Edgar, displayed very different approaches to monasticism, and while Eadwig forced Dunstan into exile, Edgar summoned him back to join his court in the north and he subsequently appointed him the Bishop of Worchester and London.

The second key figure of the reform, Oswald, was settled in Fleury, a monastery with very close relations with the Anglo-Saxon England, when he was called to England by his uncle and Archbishop Oda. However, upon his arrival and the realization that Oda was dead, Oswald did not stop at Eadwig's court but continued directly north to join Edgar and Dunstan who then made him the successor to Worchester. Æthelwold, the third main figure of the reform, had originally served as an abbot in Abingdon which he was trying to reform up until 963 when he was promoted by Edgar to Winchester. Edgar himself had a very close relationship to this church foundation as he was practically brought up and raised by the local monks while he was assisting them in the reconstruction of the monastic buildings prior to becoming a king.[181]

The triggering moments of the reform occurred earlier in 964 when Æthelwold, Oswald, and Dunstan agreed on the unacceptability of the presence of "lascivious clerks" in their monasteries, which resulted in Æthelwold's approaching the king and arranging a "great synod held at Easter, 964, probably at Winchester, which decided on a general policy of resuming ecclesiastical endowments held by 'clerks' and granting them out to monks."[182] The reform was thus launched in 964 and the forcible eviction of secular orders started at Æthelwold's and Oswald's monasteries, i.e. at Winchester and Worchester, which were the first church foundations to have turned to pure monasticism. As the welfare of the clergy fully depended on the king's favour, priests and monks frequently expressed great gratitude to the royal family. This veneration eventually promoted political theology and resulted in the strengthening of the Christ-centred concept of kingship.[183]

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[180] Eric John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Bristol: Leicester University Press, 1966) 161.
[181] John 159.
[182] John 162-163.
[183] John mentions several documented instances of ecclesiastical veneration of the king; for example, he was referred to as a true *mediator inter clericos et laicos* or in *Regularis Concordia* Æthelwold compared Edgar with

4.3.2. New Minster Foundation Charter

4.3.2.1. Textual Composition

The New Minster charter served as a written documentation and also justification of the evictions of the secular canons from the monasteries. The text is arranged into 22 chapters; first five are in the form of a proem stating a general background and thus providing biblical continuity for the next 17 chapters that are presented as a first-person narrative from the point of view of the king himself. As Harlow sums up, the "lengthy proem encompasses the history of mankind from the Creation and the Fall (chs. I-IV) to the Birth of Christ and His Ascent into Heaven (ch. V), concluding with a promise of glory for believers and a threat of eternal damnation for unbelievers."[184] The New Minster thus records the biblical story of the creation and the subsequent fall of the angels, as well as the blissful period when human beings shared Paradise with these angelic creatures prior to their own expulsion caused by the original sin. The proem is concluded by Edgar's subscription as the ruler of the English (*Anglorum basileus*).

Considering the following sections of the charter, chapters VI to VIII are particularly useful as they provide a good insight into Edgar's and Æthelwold's approach to kingship and the king's religious duties and status of authority within the kingdom. Chapter VI presents Edgar considering the question of how to be a good Christian and how to attain glory and respect through good works; chapters VII and VIII are then regarded as the primary expression of the proposed justification of the royal intervention within the monastic reform. Edgar's voice explains,

> how, as 'vicar of Christ', he has 'expelled crowds of depraved canons from the various monasteries under our rule', how he has 'gladly installed in the monasteries within our jurisdiction crowds of monks, who might intercede unhesitatingly on our behalf', and how, in particular, he has restored the New Minster at Winchester and has established an abbot and a community of monks therein.'[185]

In this passage Edgar implied a moral degeneration of the secular canons whose sinful nature caused their prayers to become essentially useless for the benefit of the royal family and other good Christians. He then resolved to follow this divine model and, as God expelled all corrupted angels from heaven, Edgar as His *vicarius* decided to expel all corrupted clerics from his earthly realm. The ruler's direction connection with God thus implies that his earthly expulsion of the

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the Good Shepherd. Both instances correspond to the terminology of the Christ-centred concept of kingship which was becoming dominant at this period. For more details, see John 177.

[184] Simon Keynes, ed. "The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester," *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile*, eds. Harlow, Clemoes, and Robinson, Vol.26 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1996) 27.

[185] Keynes, ed. "New Minster Winchester" 27.

secular canons is accountable for and justifiable on the basis of God's inviolable decision to expel fallen angels from Paradise.

Edgar's relation to the secular orders is placed into a parallel with God's relation to the fallen angels especially in the introductory chapters of the charter. This connection then consequently also affects the iconography of the charter's frontispiece and offers an interesting interpretation of the four angels surrounding the figure of Christ. The analogy between God's companions and the earthly king's subjects is possible to establish due to the paronomasia of the OE words *engel*, referring to an angelic being, and *Engle*, a member of the English nation. The OE *engel*, defined by OED as a "ministering spirit or divine messenger; one of an order of spiritual beings superior to man in power and intelligence," is an early Germanic adoption from Latin, eventually succumbing to the influence of the Old French cognate *angele* and the Latin *angelus*. The word *Engle*, denoting a member of the English nation, is a product of an etymological development which was completely independent of the development undergone by the PDE word *angel*. The *Engle*, or *Angles* as a collective noun, was formed through a semantic shift based on a metonymical relation of a place and its inhabitant. In this case, the inhabitants, i.e. *Angles*, are thought to be named after their original homeland on the continent, OED specifies it as either the Danish *Angel* or German *Angeln*, both being a name of a district in Schleswig in northern Germany and southern Denmark, which was further derived from the Germanic base *angle* on account of its shape resembling a fishing hook.

This fruitful wordplay had been previously noticed by Asser or Pope Gregory I who is claimed to have decided to Christianize the Anglo-Saxon England mainly due to the effect of this linguistic peculiarity. Bede recounts Gregory's visit of a local market where he encountered a boy from the kingdom of Deira whose fair angelic face and proclaimed English nationality triggered Gregory's association between the two words, leaving him with a long-lasting impression and a deep resolution to convert the boy's homeland. As Bede records, at the marketplace *ðā wæron hwītes līchaman and fægres andwlitan men and æðellīce gefeaxe*[186] whose countenance intrigued the passing Gregory who asked the young men where they were from and whether it was a Christian nation. Upon their answer that their homeland was the island of Britain whose inhabitants were heathens, the Pope-to-be commented on their pitiful condition: *hē þā of inneweardre heortan swīðe sworette and þuscwæþ: "Wālā wā, þæt is sārlic þætte swā fæger feorh*

[186] W.J. Sedgefield ed., *Selections from the Old English Bede* (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917) 15; trans. Jane: "some boys [...] their bodies white, their countenances beautiful, and their hair very fine."

and swā lēohtes andwlitan men scyle āgan and besittan þīestra ealdor."[187] Gregory then questions the boy about the name of their nation, which is answered *Angles* which prompts this response: *Wel þæt swā mæg, for þon hīe angelice ansīene habbaþ, and ēac swelce gedafenaþ þæt hīe engla efenierfeweardas on heofenum sīen*.[188] Bede then recounts how Gregory asked about the particular area in which the boys lived who answered that their homeland is Deira. Gregory yet again proved his linguistic sensibility and associated the name of the kingdom with the Latin *de ira*, usually translated as "from anger." His response to the boy's answer is recorded as follows: *Wel þæt is cweden Dēre, de ira eruti; hīe sculon of Godes ierre bēon ābrogdene and tō Crīstes mildheortnesse gecīegde*.[189]

This particular story shows the possible origin of the Christianization process of the Anglo-Saxons and it also reflects the significance of this particular linguistic dichotomy for Bede. Considering the purpose of Bede's work, he must have highly appreciated the implication that the Anglo-Saxon nation had been predestined to be converted and thus could be regarded a chosen people of God's divine grace. The importance of the term is demonstrated also in the title of the text, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, in which it is used not only for the Angles, but also for Saxons and other nations within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Although the linguistic relatedness between the words referring to an angel and an Angle is nonexistent, the power of language and of the interrelated images it creates in our minds is demonstrated at its highest form.

4.3.2.3. Frontispiece

As it was most probably Æthelwold who formed the textual content of the charter, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that he also may have been the primary designer of the composition and iconography of the frontispiece (fig. 3). The amount of creative input that the king himself had in the iconography or the text must both remain in the realm of speculation. Nevertheless, be it Edgar himself or Æthelwold who was the authorial voice of the written part or the composition and the iconography, the king must have been familiar with the final version of the content and must have approved of the image by which his person was going to be presented to the clergy. This image has not changed too much since the beginning of Edgar's reign and is quite similar to

[187] Sedgefield, *Selections from the Old English Bede* 15; trans. Jane: Then fetching a deep sigh from the bottom of his heart, "Alas! What pity," said he, "that the author of darkness is possessed of men of such fair countenances."
[188] Sedgefield, *Selections from the Old English Bede* 16; trans. "'Right,' said he, for they have an Angelic face, and it becomes such to be co-heirs with the Angels in heaven."
[189] Sedgefield, *Selections from the Old English Bede* 16: "'Truly are they *De ira*,' said he, 'withdrawn from wrath, and called to the mercy of Christ.'"

that of King Æthelstan, i.e. the Anglo-Saxon ruler who was "able and powerful *basileus* whose kingship derived directly from God."[190]

Edgar's portrait is an elaborate image which is divided into two registers. The upper plane displays the frontal figure of Christ in Majesty enthroned within a mandorla which is supported by four angels – one on the right and one on the left side, and two supporting the mandorla from below. Christ is rendered in a rich golden and blue gown, holding a golden book in his left hand, and giving blessings by his raised right hand. The lower register presents the figure of King Edgar standing backwards to the audience; he is dressed in a combination of blue, red, and gold, and there is a trefoil crown on his head which is turned upwards, his eyes fixed at the figure of Christ placed right above him. Both his arms are also stretched upwards; and in the left hand there is a golden book, presumably the New Minster Charter itself which the earthly king presents to the king of heaven. Edgar is depicted as being flanked by the patron saints of the New Minster; the figure of Virgin Mary standing on his left side, St Peter standing on the right.

The symmetrical composition of the holy figures is heightened by their positions and attributes. Compositionally, both figures are turned towards the king and they are watching the king's act of donation. The figure of Peter follows its iconographic tradition and is thus in possession of a golden key to heaven which is characteristic for the saint; in his left hand he is holding a golden book. Virgin Mary is depicted with a golden cross in her left hand, and a golden palm branch in her right hand. Due to the attribute of the golden cross, her figure may be interpreted as *Maria Ecclesia*, i.e. the embodiment and representation of the Church which is itself symbolized by a cross. Following this interpretation, the golden palm branch may also be interpreted as *Ecclesia Triumphas*, referring to God's triumph and His defeat of the Devil.[191]

The whole presentation scene features King Edgar's act of donation which is portrayed to be accepted by Christ, resulting in the king's salvation which is symbolized by Christ's blessing, St Peter's key being prepared to open the gate to heaven upon the king's death, and God's triumph symbolized by Virgin Mary. The ceremonial character of the scene is further emphasized by its purple background which symbolizes both the notion of royalty, but also the dual nature of Christ. This duality is often expressed by the colour combination of purple and gold, which is now considered a typical Anglo-Saxon iconographic symbol of Christ's simultaneous sacrifice and triumph. The artist's choice to include this symbolic corresponds to the importance of the theme of a heavenly triumph achieved by earthly sacrifice which runs throughout the charter itself, and which in the real life was reflected in the consequences of the monastic reform.

[190] Karkov 86.
[191] I would like to thank Kateřina Kubínová for this interpretation.

4.3.3. *Regularis Concordia*

4.3.3.1. Textual Composition

As mentioned above, similarly as in the case of the New Minster Charter and its frontispiece, both the text and the portrait of *Regularis Concordia* were most probably created by Edgar's chief advisor, Æthelwold, and the degree of the king's personal contribution or of other artists and scholars is unknown. According to the common belief, *Regularis Concordia*, also known as St Benedict's Rule, was composed in the early 970s and was imposed on the newly reformed monasteries during a synod at Winchester. Æthelwold, who belonged to the most vigorous critics of the "lasciviousness" of the secular orders, first arranged the replacement of the corrupted laity from the monasteries, which was then followed by an imposed regulation of the proper conduct of the new members in the already re-established church foundations.

Therefore, in order to prevent another wave of moral deterioration within the recently renewed monasteries, *Regularis Concordia* represented a manual of ideal conduct for both monks and nuns, and is thus frequently regarded as "a charter of the revival of religious life in tenth century England."[192] From this perspective, in the New Minster Charter, King Edgar is presented as a Christ-like figure whose responsibility is to reward people of good Christian morality but also to punish those who have given up to temptations and lapsed into evil ways. His position is thus of a divinely appointed judge, and through his charter he justifies his decisions and establishes his status of superiority based on his royal wisdom and righteousness. *Regularis Concordia*, on the other hand, serves as a didactic tool in the form of a new law-code of proper morality and behaviour which should guarantee its observers eventual freedom from consequential tribulations ordered by the heavenly king but also by their earthly ruler, as it was exemplified by the earlier evictions.

Regularis Concordia stresses the interrelatedness of the king's responsibilities and those of an abbot and places concrete expectations of the person occupying the royal office. Among other duties, these assumed responsibilities include, for example, an active contribution in the spread of Christianity, or a constant education of oneself as well as of the people who were divinely appointed for the king to guide. This connection is further strengthened in Æthelwold's tract known as "King Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries" which may have been produced to serve as a preface to *Regularis Concordia*. If this was the case, Æthelwold's prologue brings to

[192] D. H. Turner, *Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966-1066*, ed. Backhouse et al. (British Museum Publications Ltd, 1984) 47.

mind the concerns expressed by King Alfred in his Preface to the OE translation of Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*[193] which may have been a source of inspiration for the tenth-century abbot.

In the tract Edgar is presented in a highly similar manner as Alfred was in earlier times, although Æthelwold's grandiose style may have provided the narrative with an additional sense of authority and vividness. The content is almost identical to its earlier model; both texts provide a description of a prosperous past which was lost due to the ignorance and religious degeneration of the people. Edgar is then described to have been forced to take certain steps in order to reverse the dooming development, which in effect resulted in the re-establishment of peace and welfare in the kingdom:

> And [he] brought unity back to this divided kingdom, and governed all so prosperously that those who had lived in earlier times and remembered his ancestors and knew of their former deeds, wondered very much and said in astonishment: "It is truly a very great wonder of God that all things in his royal jurisdiction are thus prosperously subjugated to this young king; his ancestors, who were mature in age and in wisdom very discriminating and far seeing [and] in any struggle hard to subdue, never were able to hold this kingdom in such great peace, neither with battle, nor with tribute.[194]

4.3.3.2. Frontispiece

The visual image of the king was enriched in a similar manner as the text of *Regularis Concordia* in comparison to the text of the New Minster Charter. As discussed above, the latter work served as a justification of the evictions on the basis of the divine authority of God, which was also reflected in Edgar's portrait where he is depicted in the humble act of donation to Christ, eventually leading to the salvation of his soul. *Regularis Concordia*, however, was designed for ecclesiastics wishing to escape an earthly and heavenly punishment, and served as a manual of good Christian conduct produced by the *vicarious Christi*, i.e. the earthly king. The frontispiece (fig.4) preceding the textual sections of *Regularis Concordia* thus illustrates this current didactic role of Edgar and stresses his good deeds in accordance with the Christian doctrine which were presented as worthy to imitate by his subjects. Also, whereas in the earlier work he is portrayed in the company of Christ and other saintly figures, in the *Regularis Concordia* portrait he is accompanied by the most significant ecclesiastical yet still mortal figures of the period.

Similarly as the New Minster portrait, the composition of the *Regularis Concordia* frontispiece is also divided into two separated registers. The upper plane of the image features three figures sitting beneath three arches and sharing a *synthronos*, i.e. an extended single throne

[193] See 3.4.2. Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, p.44.
[194] Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, eds., *Councils & Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1981) 146.

designed for more than one person. The central figure depicts King Edgar who is the only person portrayed in the frontal posture with his gaze directed at the audience. On his left and right side there are Dunstan and Æthelwold who both are watching the ruler, and all three figures jointly hold a long scroll which continues into the lower register. The bottom level of the portrait is occupied by a single figure of a monk whose head is turned upwards as he gazes at the king, and his posture signals his familiarity with the content of the Benedictine Rule as he literally girds his loins with "faith and good works".[195]

The two registers of the picture are inter-related by certain parallel aspects which refer to the circumstances of the production and the desired impact of the *Regularis Concordia* in the reality outside of the portrait. Firstly, the degree of stillness of the depicted figures in the upper plane may refer to the divine significance of the text itself. The clerics and the king are depicted as highly still and unmoving, which implies the eternal constancy of their divine authority and thus also the resulting constant authority of their work. On the other hand, to use Karkov's expression, the monk's "dynamic pose of genuflection"[196] significantly contrasts with the calm immobility of the figures above him, and perhaps symbolizes the monastic change in progress, the Church distancing itself from the past evil ways established by the secular canons and accepting a more saintly kind of conduct directed by the Benedictine Rule.

The two levels may be also interpreted to symbolize all stages of the formation of *Regularis Concordia* including the post-production effect on the ecclesiastics' lives within the newly restored monasteries. Individual figures in the upper register may be perceived to display various phases of the active production process: Dunstan stands for the theoretical inspiration while Æthelwold for the creativity of writing; Edgar represents the continual supervision and guaranteed authority necessary for the work's implementation in practice. Upon the completion of these stages of the production process, the book is finished and is to be accepted and observed by individual ecclesiastics who are represented by the monk in the lower register.

Following this interpretation, the shared *synthronos* and the implied Trinitarian symbolism of the upper level may imply equality among the figures and their shared authorship of the charter which is represented by the uninscribed scroll they jointly hold. However, each of these "authors" represents a different type of authorial contribution; we cannot assume all three including Edgar to have been creatively active in the actual manual production of the written record. The three portrayed figures demonstrate two senses of the word as defined in OED; firstly, the primary

[195] Robert Deshman, "Benedictus Monarcha et Monarchus: Early Medieval Ruler Theology and the Anglo-Saxon Reform," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 22 (1988) 205.
[196] Karkov 95.

meaning of "a writer, and senses relating to literature," and secondly, the more distanced and passive meaning of "a creator, cause, or source" which could be further specified as "a person who or (occas.) thing which gives rise to or causes an event, circumstance, state of affairs, etc.; a source."[197] Due to the historical documentation and scholarly observations, it is becoming clear that the author in the primary sense of the word was Æthelwold, Dunstan was probably the theoretical "creator" or provider of ideological inspiration, and King Edgar was given the passive role of an author, i.e. he arranged and organized the composition of the text and the image by assembling the scholars and approving or disapproving of their work.

The ruler's crucial role is symbolized by his frontal position and his eyes staring straight ahead similarly as the image of Christ in Majesty in the frontispiece to the New Minster Charter. In contrast, the dependency of the clerics is suggested by their constant gaze at the ruler as if they were expecting a royal command or judgment. Edgar's frontal immovable posture and the implication of his authorship of the following text may be compared to that of St Benedict in his miniature (fig. 11) preceding the original Rule of St Benedict (MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii, fol. 117v). Although both figures are depicted in the frontal position sitting on an assumed throne, there is a significant difference in the degree of activity performed by each. While the king is presented strictly en-face, Benedict is portrayed in a position characteristic for important church authorities or apostles who are currently in the process of writing. In his portrait, Benedict is presented as *auctoritas*, which explicitly confirms his authorship of the Rule. His role of an author is emphasized by his personal exposure of the work and its introduction to the three monks standing next to the Rule on his left hand-side, which is completely missing in Edgar's image. As Karkov explains,

> Edgar appears as the historical authority behind the reform and its texts, a king whose authority is itself authorised by Christ, and whose person is part of the writing of monastic history, but he is not literally a scribe or author in the mode of Æthelwold, Dunstan, and Benedict, no matter how close his involvement with the production of that text may have been.[198]

[197] *author, n*. OED.
[198] Karkov 99.

4.4. Queen Emma/Ælfgifu and King Cnut

4.4.1. Historical Background

The tendency of Anglo-Saxon kings to strengthen their royal position through the donation or direct authorship of written documents continues during the reign of Edgar's son, Æthelred II (978-1016). Unfortunately, there are no surviving manuscript portraits of this ruler; nevertheless, his literary activity is well preserved and demonstrated in the textual sphere, i.e. in the large bulk of law-codes and other administrative texts he produced.[199] Æthelred's wife Emma was a daughter of the Duke of Normandy and was wedded to Æthelred in 1002, on which occasion she was attributed with a new name of Ælfgifu, representing her newly-acquired English identity and connecting her to famous female figures of the same name from the West Saxon history.[200] Æthelred's reign was terminated by his defeat to the Danish king in 1016 and since then there was a period of foreign rulership in the English kingdom. The new ruler, Cnut the Great, was the king of England (1016-1035), Denmark (1019-1035), Norway and parts of Sweden (1028-1035), and according to the historian Norman Frank Cantor, Cnut was "the most effective king in Anglo-Saxon history."[201] He was the son of King of Denmark and as such he was given the English throne upon a victorious Viking invasion in 1016. While struggling with his political opponents abroad, he managed to maintain peace in the English kingdom without using military force.

In order to reinforce his claim to the throne through an assumed continuation of traditional royal families, he married the Norman widow with whom he conceived two sons, Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor. As Karkov notes, the marriage was a "blatantly political step" supposed to provide Cnut with an English political identity on the basis of an impression of royal continuity on the English throne. This strategy proved highly successful; Keynes quite correctly refers to the event as a 'brilliantly contrived double act".[202] During their reign, the originally foreign royal couple turned into venerated rulers of the kingdom, who had gained their positions of power through traditionally Anglo-Saxon means, i.e. a generous support of religion and learning in the form of newly commissioned books. The couple continued in the established habit of royal donation to various monasteries; the most notable, of course, being documented in the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster which includes a double portrait depicting the king and the queen's presentation act.

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[199] See p.63.
[200] The name Ælfgifu was already taken by: Eadwig's queen, one of the daughters of Edward the Elder, the first wife of Æthelred II, one of the daughters of Æthelred II, and the sainted wife of King Edmund (grandmother of Æthelred II).
[201] Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995) 166.
[202] Simon Keynes, "Cnut," *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England,* eds. Lapidge, Blair, Keynes and Scragg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 109.

4.4.2. *Liber Vitae*

4.4.2.1. Textual Composition

The placement of the presentation scene in the *Liber Vitae* is significant due to the nature and the content of the book. Harlow provides a definition of the *liber vitae* type of work, qualifying it as the "earthly counterpart to the heavenly Book of Life."[203] The New Minster text is usually dated to 1031, and was most probably written by the monk Ælfsige who may have been also the main illuminator, while the commissioner of the work is thought to be Ælfwine, a monk who was eventually promoted to Abbott of the New Minster early in 1031. Therefore, as the work was ordered and composed by ecclesiastics, it can be perceived as a representation of the Winchester community's perspective of themselves; in Karkov's words, "the *Liber Vitae* was a functional book used each day at mass to commemorate [...] the dead who were special to the Winchester community [and which expresses] its sense of its own identity under its new abbot – an identity, however, that was bound inextricably to its status as a royal foundation and to its history of royal patronage."[204] Apart from the New Minster text, another renowned early medieval *liber vitae* was composed in Durham which was also created to commemorate benefactors and supporters of the community of St. Cuthbert (London, British Library, Cotton Domitian VII).[205]

The content of the whole book provides a good insight into its desired effect as well as to the interpretation of the frontispiece in relation to the nature of the following texts. Because the *Liber Vitae* survives in a fragmentary condition, the proposed order of the individual pieces is uncertain and derives from that which is generally accepted in scholarly works. The frontispiece and two other drawings is thought to be followed by a detailed account of the history of the New Minster, focusing on royal benefactors of the West Saxon royal family starting with Alfred and ending with a prayer for the deceased. Then there is a preface to the *Liber Vitae* proper which claims that the enlisted people are ordered appropriately and it also stresses the corresponding relation of the earthly *Liber Vitae* and the heavenly Book of Judgment: "By the making of a record on earth in this written form, they [the names of those commemorated] may be inscribed on the pages of the heavenly book."[206] The next text is King Alfred's will which is followed by a list of saints and the West Saxon regnal list started by Ine, King of Wessex (688-726), and ended by Cnut. The world of the living is then replaced by records of God's eternal plan which includes

[203] Harlow et el. 50.
[204] Karkov 121.
[205] For a detailed commentary on the *Liber Vitae* of Durham, see the doctoral thesis of Elizabeth Briggs, "Religion, Society, and Politics, and the *Liber Vitae* of Durham" (University of Leeds, September 1987).
[206] Walter de Gray Birch, ed. *Liber Vitae: Register and Martyrology of New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester* (London: Simpkin & Co., 1892) 11–12. Trans. Keynes, *Liber Vitae* 83.

tracts on the Six Ages of the world, number of years from the Creation to the Nativity, number of years from the Creation to Christ's Passion, number of years of Christ's life, number of days from Christ's Baptism to his Passion, age of Virgin Mary at time of Christ's death, and number of years she was with him in the world.[207] The rest of the texts are of ecclesiastical character related to the specific customs and habits of the monks of the New Minster community.

As a whole, the *Liber Vitae* is a collection of texts which gives an impression of a continuous development of the West Saxon kingdom as well as of the whole world. All aspects of life become interrelated including the secular and sacral spheres, the past and the present, human and divine. The book thus firmly establishes the New Minster community as an important part of the West Saxon history, but also attributes the new king and queen with an undeniable heritage and legacy of great kings of the past who through their devotion and achievements assign the couple with great authority, power, and respect. As Karkov quite rightly points out, the donor "portrait of Ælfgifu and Cnut is in many ways a microcosm of the book itself with its combination of languages, church and court, gift and reward, present and future time, the here-and-now of the New Minster and the eternity of heaven."[208]

4.4.2.2. Frontispiece

The *Liber Vitae* frontispiece (fig.5) is a double portrait of the royal couple presenting a golden altar cross to the New Minster Abbey, Winchester. Above the cross there is Christ in Majesty who is flanked by Virgin Mary on his right side and St Peter on his left side. Next to the cross there is one angel on each side, one putting a veil on the queen's head, the other crowing the king. The cross is certainly of central importance in the picture, considering its placement in the middle of the page and also the fact that it is immediately surmounted by the enthroned Christ who is the only figure in a frontal position of authority. Moreover, all figures and the background are of plain colour, except for Peter's key and the books held by Christ and Virgin Mary which are all gold, and the donated cross which is also covered in bright yellow and its endings are further emphasized by red and dark shading.

Emma and Cnut's portrait is comparable to that of Edgar at the beginning of the New Minster Charter in which he is depicted in the process of the act of presentation to Christ. The composition and iconography of these two images display several similarities. Both were composed to record the acts of royal presentation whose ultimate receiver is Christ in Majesty. The figures of Virgin Mary and St Peter also appear in both portraits; nevertheless, their inclusion

[207] Karkov 145.
[208] Karkov 145.

is caused by the fact that both donations were directed at the New Minster whose patrons are these particular saints. On the other hand, however, there are also significant differences and shifts of meaning involved in the two pictures. In Edgar's portrait the focus seems to be on the figure of the enthroned Christ towards whom the king is stretching his arms and directs his gaze, and there is a sensed movement upwards which ends within the frontal image of Christ calmly enthroned in a mandorla. In the image of Cnut and Emma, however, the centre of attention is the donated object held and gazed at by the royal couple, and symbolizing the Cross of Christ as the instrument of salvation and Christ's defeat of death. Christ is depicted in the role of the highest judge who, with the assistance of Virgin Mary and Peter, evaluates the quality of the gift and the donors, and decides whether their souls may enter the Book of Life. The *Liber Vitae* image is thus not so much a portrait of any human or saintly being; rather, it is focused on the significance of the cross as a tool of salvation which enables all righteous and worthy Christians to achieve afterlife. This immense symbolic importance of the cross is illustrated in the portrait; its splendour displays some qualities of a *crux gemmata* and thus stresses the eventual triumph of Christ and His salvation of man, in this particular case the salvation of the presented king and queen as the donors of the holy object.

While it is certainly true that the presented cross is given the highest significance within the portrait; still, the specific depiction of the king and queen also attracts a considerable amount of discussion. In fact, the figures of the royal couple are often a centre of attention of scholarly examination, especially regarding their respective positions in relation to the saintly beings above them as well as to the central position of Christ himself. Emma's controversial portrayal provokes various interpretations, which is mainly caused by the compositional prominence of her position and attributes, deeply contrasting with historically earlier royal portraits in which the figure of the queen was either omitted or displayed as much less significant. Apart from the queen's size which is comparable to that of the king, her significance lies in her placement on the right side of the cross, i.e. also on the right side of Christ, where she is further paralleled with Virgin Mary who is placed above the queen.[209]

The figure of Cnut, on the other hand, is mainly connected to the attributes with which he is depicted. In his left hand he is holding a sword, the traditional symbol of justice, in his right hand he is grasping the donated cross; and there is an oversized foliate crown, symbolizing the divine anointment of a king, which is being placed on his head by a descending angel. Cnut's

[209] For a thorough examination of the Anglo-Saxon cult of Virgin Mary, and the iconographic and literary assimilation of earthly queens to the image of the Virgin, see, for example, Karkov 123-133, or Pauline Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century,"*Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe,* ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997).

sword also represents a symbol of authority, judgment, punishment or reward, and also military strength, which he proved by conquering England in 1016. During his reign, however, England experienced an extremely calm and stable period void of any substantial endangerments of the kingdom's peace. The king perceived the royal responsibility to protect his people as a highly important aspect of his rule, which is exhibited in a large number of decrees, letters, or his actions and relationships based on trust with his earls who governed the kingdom in times of the ruler's absence.[210] This inner need to protect his subordinates may have partially sprang from his Danish warrior heritage; however, as evidenced in his letter to the English of 1019-1020, whose copy is now preserved in York Gospels (York, Chapter Library, MS Add. 1, fol. 160rv), Cnut understood serving and protecting his people as kings' personal responsibility given to them by God himself. This belief in turn forced Cnut to fulfil not only the implied wishes of the highest Lord, but also of His representatives on earth:

> *[2] ⁊ ic cyðe eow, þæt ic wylle beon hold hlaford ⁊ unswicende to Godes gerihtum ⁊ to rihtre woroldlage.*
> *[3] Ic nam me to gemynde þa gewritu ⁊ þa word, þe se arcebiscop Lyfing me fram þam papan brohte of Rome, þæt ic scolde æghwær Godes lof upp aræran ⁊ unriht alecgan ⁊ full frið wyrcean be ðære mihte, þe me God syllan wolde.*
> *[4] Nu ne wandode ic na minum sceattum, þa hwile þe eow unfrið on handa stod; nu ic mid Godes fultume þæt totwæmde mid minum scattum.*
> *[5] Þa cydde man me, þæt us mara hearm to fundode, þonne us wel licode; ⁊ þa for ic me sylf mid þam mannum þe me mid foron into Denmearcon, þe eow mæst hearm of com; ⁊ þæt hæbbe mid Godes fultume forene forfangen, þæt eow næfre heonon forð þanon nan unfrið to ne cymð, þa hwile þe ge me rihtlice healdað and min lif byð.*
> *[6] Nu ðancige ic Gode ælmihtigum his fultumes ⁊ his midlheortnesse, þæt ic þa myclan hearmes, þe us to fundedon, swa gelogod hæbbe, þæt we ne þurfon þanon nenes hearmes us asittan, ac us to fullan fultume & to ahreddingge, gyf us neod byð.*[211]

Similarly as in Edgar's donation scene, the attributes of the cross of Christ and the cross-key of Peter represent the symbols of judgement, protection, and victory, which is established by

[210] See, for example, "Extracts from the laws of Cnut" or "Cnut's letter to the people of England," Whitelock ed. and trans., *English Historical Documents*, *500-1042* (Routledge: 1979).
[211] *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. Liebermann, 273; trans. *EHD*, 415: "2. And I inform you that I will be a gracious lord and a faithful observer of God's rights and just secular law. 3. I have borne in mind the letters and messages which Archbishop Lying brought me from Rome from the pope, that I should everywhere exalt God's praise and suppress wrong and establish full security, by that power which it has pleased God to give me. 4. Since I did not spare my money as long as hostility was threatening you, I have now with God's help put an end to it with my money. 5. Then I was informed that greater danger was approaching us than we liked at all, and then I went myself with the men who accompanied me to Denmark, from where the greatest injury had come to you, and with God's help I have taken measures so that never henceforth shall hostility reach you from there as long as you support me rightly and my life lasts. 6. Now I thank Almighty God for his help and his mercy, that I have so settled the great dangers which were approaching us that we need fear no danger to us from there; but [we may reckon] on full help and deliverance, if we need it."

their ability to open the door to Paradise and allow only the humble and righteous Christians to enter. Through the donation of such a beautiful and large cross, Cnut demonstrates his possession of the virtues symbolized by the object, and in result he achieves a promise of salvation, which is proved by the divine gift of crown and the descending angel's hand gesture towards Christ. For Cnut this divine approval was very important, considering that the Scandinavians had accepted Christianity quite recently and Cnut thus needed a visible demonstration of God's confirmation of his worthiness. From this perspective, the crown may symbolize Christ's acceptance of the king's gift and a guarantee for his divine permission to join Him in heaven. The same interpretation may be applied to Emma's veil which is being delivered to her by another angel who is also pointing towards the figure of Christ. As Karkov notes, that this is presented as a closed deal is suggested by the aristocratic lay figure in the Last Judgment sequence (fig. 6 and fig. 8; fols. 6v and 7r) who resembles the figure of Cnut and is placed at the head of the procession of the saved in the upper left corner of the folio (fig. 7).

The portrayed books in the composition of the frontispiece and of the Last Judgment scene are also quite significant as to the interpretation of the king's and queen's salvation. Virgin Mary is pictured as holding a closed book which has been suggested to represent the "hope for eternal victory at the Last Judgement of those whose names are recorded in the *Liber Vitae* itself."[212] This claim is based on the interpretation of Virgin Mary as the guarantor of Christ's triumph and His eternal victory; the finality of His achievement could be also deduced from the books the figures are holding. Similarly, Christ and also Michael in the following scene of the Last Judgment are in the possession of open books which likewise confirm the finality of the achieved triumph.

This victory symbolized by the depicted books is reinforced by the material book of the donated *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster which is supposed to secure the salvation of the royal couple. Therefore, the abstract purpose of donation to an ecclesiastical community yet again intersects with the material objects commemorating the act in the tangible world. The illuminator described the moment in which Cnut and his queen were granted salvation through Christ's acceptance of their gift, which is reiterated by the inclusion of the portrait as the introductory image of the *Liber Vitae* and also by the enlistment of the royal couple in the list of the commemorated persons. The appearance of one's name in the *Liber Vitae* list could thus be considered a means of the soul's redemption, which again demonstrates the Anglo-Saxon trust in the combination of faith, patronage, and the written word as the right tools for reaching heaven.

[212] Karkov 131.

4.4.3. *Encomium Emmae Reginae*

4.4.3.1. Textual Composition

King Cnut's death in 1035 brought about power struggles between his son from an earlier marriage and two sons born by Emma, which eventually resulted in the former queen's exile in Flanders and her sons' escape to Denmark and Normandy. Three years later Harthacnut invaded England and claimed the English throne, causing also his brother's return from his exile on the continent. As Emma regained her position of power, her next step was to secure it for the next periods, which she decided to carry out through the traditional Anglo-Saxon means of implementing royal influence, i.e. via the written media. Consequently, she commissioned her biographical and highly political self-presentation entitled *Encomium Emmae Reginae* which was introduced by the queen's second portrait surviving to the present day. The text was produced in 1041 or 1042, most probably by a monk from the monastery of Saint-Bertin in Saint-Omer Flanders, and the strategy selected for the presentation of the Anglo-Saxon history very much corresponded to that of the earlier kings and their written accounts of the glorious past.

Logically, as the queen's reputation and respect among the people originated mainly during her marriage to the Danish ruler and escalated during his reign, her primary interest in her book was to display that particular period as a golden age of the West Saxon kingdom, naming all the achievements and qualities of her husband while denigrating all of her possible rivals who could try to claim the throne. The main focus of the book lies in a detailed record of Cnut's glorious deeds, personal qualities and skills, as well as the description of the immense prosperity and peace of his reign. The period following his death is recorded as full of political struggles and violence, which is presented in the text to have been resolved by the joint reign of Emma and her two sons. The ending of the narrative reflects this idealized Trinitarian type of rule, stressing the family bond between a mother and her children:

> Mother and both sons, having no disagreement between them, enjoy all the ready goods of the kingdom. Here faith is held among those who share the rule, here the bond of maternal and fraternal love thrives indestructibly. All these things Jesus Christ maintained for them. He who makes those who live in one house of one mind, the Lord of all things, for whom, abiding in the Trinity, rule flourishes unbinding.[213]

Nevertheless, Emma's idea of a peaceful rule shared by a mother and her descendents soon proved to be merely her fantasy. Shortly after Harthacnut's death his brother attacked the queen and deprived her of all her possessions and power.

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[213] *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. and trans. Alistair Campbell (London: Royal Historical Society, 1949) 52.

4.4.3.2. Frontispiece

The frontispiece of *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (fig. 9) encompasses the main message of the text within one single image. The figure of the queen is apparently the most prominent element; the size of her body is comparably larger than that of her adult male companions, and she is depicted crowned and enthroned. The last two aspects are highly interesting, considering the fact that in medieval art up until the mid-11th century only Christ or other saintly figures were enthroned, and earthly male rulers only recently started to be portrayed on a throne. This position thus induces the queen's immense power and authority, both in relation to her sons and the kingdom as such. On her left side both her grown-up sons are haltingly peeping in and below them there is a kneeling monk, perhaps the Encomiast himself, offering her the book.

The open book presented to the queen serves as an intersection of the acts performed by all the displayed figures: the actual producer of the text is handing it to the queen, she is accepting the text she has commissioned and is about to present it to her children, one of whom is already reaching out to touch it. This image recalls Asser's account[214] of an anecdote in which Alfred's mother showed a book of English poetry to her sons and Alfred was so mesmerized by its cover that he managed to win his mother's competition and got it was an award. It is quite probable that the artist was inspired by this story while creating Emma's portrait, connecting thus the queen and her royal lineage with that of the admirable King Alfred. The similarity of the events suggests not only a continuity of the Anglo-Saxon royal ascendency, but also a hereditary quality of the English kings' appreciation of books and learning, placing the Anglo-Saxon queen and the king's mother as a crucial element in the rulers' own education and tutoring.

Quite understandably, as Emma was the commissioner of the book, the particular period of the Anglo-Saxon history which is described in the book is presented from her point of view; the Encomiast created the queen's version of events which most suited her current intensions. The authority of the text is suggested by her Virgin-like frontal position whose stillness and confident countenance contrasts with the moving figures of her sons and the monk; however, Emma's connection to Virgin Mary is not reflected merely in her enthroned frontal position of authority, but also in their motherly role. The sons of the Virgin and the queen could be both considered as saviours of their people; Christ as *Salvator mundi*, i.e. the "Saviour of the world", while Emma's son could be understood as an earthly king taking care of his subordinates by re-establishing peace in the kingdom.[215]

[214] See p. 32.
[215] See n.57.

4.5. Summary

While the preceding chapter focused on the formative stage of an extensive royal production of written documents, this chapter commented upon the following development and the later kings' approaches to text. The late 9th century and the subsequent period witnessed different royal attitudes to the uses of the written word which derived from the natural development of the society and learning in general. On the one hand, Alfred could be considered the founder of English literacy, and the books produced within the framework of his reform were supposed to educate about God and the divine wisdom, and in effect to transform the national morality and ensure peace and welfare for the years to come. His approach, thus, could be defined as didactic because the purpose of the texts was to improve the intellectual and religious standard of the nation, which would consequently result in God's favours for the whole kingdom.

On the other hand, however, the kings succeeding Alfred on the Anglo-Saxon throne in the 10th and 11th century demonstrated a more "modern" approach to the written word. While still inheriting a positive relationship to books and learning as such, texts produced at the royal court illustrated more varied intentions. Most importantly, the individual kings' treatment of books and the extent of their participation in the production could be discerned from an additional type of evidence not available for the reign of King Alfred, i.e. the visual arts. This chapter thus focused on deductions based on the iconographic features of the historical images. The above discussed monarchs were selected with regards to their appearance in one of the surviving portraits; the resulting choice was King Æthelstan, King Edgar, and King Cnut and his queen Emma/ Ælfgifu.

Æthelstan's large collection of religious texts exhibits the traditional Anglo-Saxon interest in books as a means of improving one's Christian self which he may have inherited from his Anglo-Saxon royal predecessors. On the other hand, the practical motive of reinforcing his royal authority outside of the West Saxon kingdom was perhaps even more important for the composition and donation of manuscripts. Moreover, there is another reason for the production and donation of books which is shared by the subsequent rulers, i.e. the need to secure the salvation of the king's soul. This purpose was supposed to be fulfilled through the charitable act of donation, the nature and content of the textual part of the manuscripts, but also by the ruler portraits usually depicted in a position of veneration. Through the insertion of the portrait into a manuscript, the king's image as a devoted Christian is preserved and remembered for a considerable period of time; for example, the portraits of the Anglo-Saxon kings of the 10th and 11th century have been already preserved for an impressive period of 1000 years.

King Edgar's relationship to the production of written documents is comparable to that of Æthelstan. Neither king could be considered an accomplished scholar in the sense of King Alfred; nevertheless, they still assumed an important role in the composition of books and their spread across the kingdom. There are two surviving portraits of Edgar; one depicting him in a presentation scene of the New Minster Charter and interacting with Christ, the other showing him as a passive co-author, holding a scroll symbolizing the Benedict Rule. While the king was not the authorial voice of the texts, he certainly agreed with the ideas presented. He was also the key element of the monastic reform which could not have been carried out without his royal support.

The foreign royal couple of Cnut and Emma are the focus of the third and last section, consisting of the discussion of two surviving ruler portraits. The preceding kings used some texts for the reinforcement of their authority, some for the reestablishment of Christian doctrines, and some as a humble plea for God's favours and salvation. Cnut is known to have issued numerous decrees of socio-political nature, while Emma is best known for her version of the period of Cnut's reign, *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, which was produced for practical reasons, i.e. to secure a prosperous future for herself and her sons after the death of Cnut. The MS Stowe 944 portrait illustrates the charitable Christian deeds performed by the couple; Emma's portrait with her sons in *Encomium Emmae* turns to the roots and in an Asser-like fashion it documents a private moment of study in which Emma represents the teacher holding a book and her sons stand for the students, much like Alfred in his own childhood.

Thus, royal figures of this period learned how to exploit texts and use the written word as a tool in achieving their personal ambitions. While composing or arranging the composition of new texts, various kings demonstrated a various degree of this newly gained motivation which became mixed with the primary stimulus of reaching salvation of their souls and to accompany God in the afterlife. Thus, the rulers' Christian faith still governed most of their decisions and actions, while more immediately useful advantages such as the support and expansion of their royal authority represented merely as an added bonus. Also, while the primary purpose of Alfred's books was didactic and their recipients were supposed to study them carefully, the royal documents ordered in the later period were either meant to be of informative nature commenting on the current ongoing reforms and laws, or to serve as a sort of untouchable relic only for viewing and appreciating its beauty and complexity of structure. In any case, all kings and the queen discussed in this chapter still treated written documents as a significant source of knowledge and divine wisdom; therefore, they may be assumed to continue the legacy established by King Alfred, although in a slightly altered form.

5. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the present thesis was to analyze the importance of the written word as a ruling device of the Anglo-Saxon kings. The period selected for the study was the early Christian era of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms; the ending point of the period was the Norman Conquest of 1066 which interrupted the natural developments and started a new phase in the Anglo-Saxon history. The kings' approach to the written word was examined on the basis of surviving written and iconographic evidence, i.e. on documents whose composition was either ordered or directly authored by the rulers, and also on ruler portraits and the manuscripts in which they are inserted.

The structure of the thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter consisted of a theoretical and historical background as to the main concepts studied; the first term discussed was the medieval notion of authorship. Apparently, being considered an author in modern times and in the Anglo-Saxon England implies very different circumstances and environment in which the creative process occurs. This section provided a brief yet condensed survey of factors which characterize Anglo-Saxon authorship as compared to the modern understanding of the concept, providing thus a clearer idea of the further development of the main argument. The discussed aspects in this section included the language(s) in use, the extent and expansion of literacy, the person of the author, the usual or intended audience, and also the common reasons of writing, i.e. the dominant subject matters.

The medieval concept of kingship was the second notion explored. This subchapter offered a brief survey of the development of the royal figure from early Semitic kingdoms to Hebrew conceptions of the status, which in turn presented some useful background information concerning the development of the ruling position in the Anglo-Saxon England, starting from Germanic times and ending in the early post-Conquest period. The consequent overview provided answers as to the way in which the Anglo-Saxon folk perceived their king and the resultant general expectations of his office, as well as the process in which this perception altered with the arrival of Christianity and how this change could have affected the kings' actions.

The last section of the historical background presented an overview of the kings' attitude towards Christianity preceeding the reign of King Alfred, illustrating the level of royal religious adherence in which Alfred inherited his kingdom and also clarifying the possible reasons of his active promotion of learning. In the early stages of conversion some rulers were affected more strongly than others; the extent to which they followed Christian doctrines varied due to the socio-historical circumstances of the respective periods of their reign, as well as their inner predisposition to devote their lives to religion rather than to pragmatic earthly duties. The

variation concerned different responsibilities of a medieval Christian ruler; for instance, their acceptance of divine wisdom, the degree of their determination to spread the faith, the support of theological education and production of crucial texts, or simply their own personal commitment to become proper Christians. Therefore, the position of a king within the Anglo-Saxon England could be perceived to emerge from a natural development of a sacral figure, gradually adjusting itself to the current needs and conditions of the society.

In the second chapter of the thesis the Anglo-Saxon royal writing is examined in more detail, with the focus on King Alfred as the author of the religious reform and of the texts produced within the scope of his educational scheme. Considering the three main concepts discussed in the theoretical background, King Alfred demonstrates an example of a Christian king and his literary activities reflect the current socio-historical situation within the kingdoms. At the time of his accession to the West Saxon throne, the Vikings had already undergone some attempts at the invasion on the island, including the renowned raid on Lindisfarne in 793. Another strong wave of attacks would come in the late 9th century and Alfred was about to deal with the reconstruction of military defence and he himself would have to go into hiding and fight the Scandinavians on the battlefield. The period of his reign was quite turbulent, which affected the king's understanding of reality as a divine punishment resulting from earlier ignorance and sinful conduct of both his people and the royal family.

This idea is expressed in various works, most explicitly in the Preface to the translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* which serves as a kind of manifesto of Alfred's resolution to fix the current situation by facing its main cause. The education and religious reforms thus went hand in hand; the gained literacy was supposed to bring knowledge obtained from books which formed the new curriculum in the newly founded schools directed at all young free men of the kingdom. Christianity thus played a significant role in the king's reformation and the written word was perceived as the ultimate source of knowledge, both of the English language as such but also of the divine wisdom whose possession was perceived as a remedy of the nation. Alfred's books of choice reflect this emphasis on the didacticism of the works: *Pastoral Care* was a kind of Christian manual of desirable qualities and proper conduct of ecclesiastics and essentially all men wishing to teach the common folk. The distribution of this work to all monasteries resulted in the theoretical preparation of "tutors" whose role was to transmit God's message onto the minds of Alfred's laity. St Augustine's *Soliloques* is a more personal treatise addressing some private issues concerning one's faith in God and occasional doubts and forgetting one's divine origin. This work is directed at every member of the kingdom and is supposed to prompt a recollection of the true Christian priorities and reinstate them within one's life. The didacticism of the work is

reflected in its dialogue form and Alfred uses rhetorical and stylistic devices enabling him to express his own share in the current poor situation of the kingdom and brings his royal self downwards and places it among other sinners with whom he felt as equal in God's eyes.

Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* represents another example of spiritual guidance. The purpose of this work was to address the issue of earthly hardships and to propose a Christian perspective enabling the sufferer to mentally overcome the struggle and not to corrupt one's soul through evil thoughts. This message was especially useful for the king himself who was inflected with a long-lasting illness of an unknown origin which repeatedly caused him considerable pain. The attention of the reading Christian was directed at the fact that the world is God's creation and all terrestrial struggles and suffering were to be rewarded upon reaching the heavenly kingdom. The lesson taught to the reader thus consisted in the reminder of God's inherent goodness and love which should console the soul of the sufferer who should be aware of the purifying effect of sufferings and perhaps be even grateful. Asser's style in *Life of King Alfred* strengthened Alfred's reputation as a wise, respectful, and devoted ruler who deserves the trust of his people who should not be afraid to follow him physically in the earthly resistance to the current tribulations but also mentally in the restoration of faith and good morals performed through the reforms. The major concepts recurring within the books were wisdom, learning, knowledge, and goodness. As wisdom and goodness were repeatedly identified with God, learning and knowledge were understood from two perspectives: firstly, the primary meaning referred to the importance of the actual study of the English language and the theological ideas presented in the OE translations; the secondary meaning emphasized the need to pursue God represented in the Christian doctrines and adjust one's priorities and conduct accordingly.

The third chapter deals with the theoretical issues as presented in the medieval iconography which also portrays the Anglo-Saxon kings as wise and Christ-like teachers of their people. Nevertheless, while Alfred's motives behind the production of written works were guided by his royal responsibility for the whole kingdom whose fate depended on the rejuvenation of morality within the hearts of his subjects; the rulers of the 10th and 11th centuries appeared to be more self-absorbed and primarily strived to save their own souls. This intention is reflected in the royal donation acts of manuscripts and other valuable objects to various church foundations and it could be further reinforced by the iconography of an accompanying portrait documenting the act. It is important to note that the Christological view of kingship reached its peak in this particular period, which resulted in the rulers being perceived as *Christi gespelia*, i.e. Christ's vicars on earth whose actions reflect the wishes of the deity and thus are entirely worthy for a common Anglo-Saxon to follow. In their portraits the rulers are depicted in the company of saintly figures,

which serves as a bridge between the pure divine morality of the heavenly sphere and the sinful terrestrial kingdoms, and links the earthly kings directly with the saint or God. Apart from the most important motivation of saving one's soul, later kings of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms also exploited the practical advantages of the written word, which often resulted in the reinforcement of their royal influence and power in more remote areas (Æthelstan's case) or in times their authority was being threatened (Emma's case).

To be more specific, King Æthelstan could be regarded a worthy follower of Alfred's legacy. Similarly as his grandfather, Æthelstan placed great emphasis on learning and religion as the core of the kingdom which needed to be constantly improved and cultivated. Keynes also acknowledges the king's credit in the active promotion of learning, saying that "the chief interest of Æthelstan's books springs from their relation to the king's patronage of religion and learning [because] they provide tangible support for the idea that Æthelstan's court was a place where people of different backgrounds met and shared their knowledge."[216] This continual progress in the foundation of a thriving intellectual environment and religious communities across the country prepared a solid ground for the initial stages of the later monastic reform undertaken and supported by King Edgar. Although Æthelstan did not achieve a reputation of an educated scholar as his grandfather did, he still found the means to carry on the main idea and purpose of Alfred's scholarly activities and he thus most probably sensed his royal and Christian responsibility to promote the areas of learning and religion, as well as to favour the needs and interests of his fellow Christians.

Edgar may not have been an author of written works in the primary meaning of the word either; nevertheless, he still continued the legacy established by Alfred and followed by Æthelstan, and was continually attempting to expand the intellectual horizons of his people and to strengthen the crucial role of religion in the well-being and prosperity of the kingdom. The frontispiece to the New Minster Charter presents him as a pious and wise ruler in the possession of a book which eventually grants him eternal salvation from Christ himself. The telling text of *Regularis Concordia* and the actual monastic reform, which was in progress primarily due to his royal support, document his vigorous activity in the religious sphere, which most probably sprang from his internal conscious need to ensure a bright future for his subordinates. The impact of the Anglo-Saxon kings' legacy, now enriched by that of Edgar, is recognizable in Emma's portraits with Cnut and with her sons, as well as in the future kings' understanding of rulership as being

[216] Simon Keynes, "King Æthelstan's Books," *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 197.

based on generous patronage of learning and the Church, which in result provides the ruler with an immense degree of authority and respect.

For Cnut the Great the most important aspect of the rule was the protection of one's people, which is documented in the content of the written works he produced. Queen Emma, however, fully exploited more personal benefits of the written word. This strategy proved most striking by her commission of *Encomium Emmae Reginae* which was an attempt to reconstruct the Anglo-Saxon past in order to secure a prosperous future for both herself and her sons. The first lines of the text ask Christ to preserve the admirable image of the queen, *salus tibi sit a Domino Iesu Christo, o regina, que omnibus in hoc sexu positis prestas morum eligantia*[217]; however, nothing fulfils this wish more fully than the book itself in which the image and memory of the queen is preserved for centuries to come. It is important to realize that the iconography of Emma's portraits cannot be identified in neither case as purely authoritative or celebratory. The queen is always depicted within a scene commemorating a moment from her personal life, be it a public event shared with her husband, or a more private experience in which she was reading to or tutoring her sons. In either case, Emma's existence is not meant to be celebrated merely for her greatness and authority; rather, the purpose of her portraits appears to be commemorative, so that the viewers of the images and readers of the text are reminded of her good deeds and character and perhaps spare a prayer or two for the salvation of her soul. The book was thus used not only as a type of entertainment or a means of political power, but rather as a tool serving to maintain or establish one's place within the society against possible rivals.

[217] *Encomium Emmae*, ed. and trans. Campbell and Keynes, 4-5: *"*May our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you, O Queen, who excel all those of your sex in the admirability of your way of life."

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RÉSUMÉ

1. Úvod

Hlavním cílem této práce bylo analyzovat význam psaného slova coby prostředek vládnutí anglosaských panovníků. Pro tento účel bylo vybráno období ohraničené příchodem římských misionářů roku 597 a normandským vyloděním v roce 1066, jelikož tato událost již předznamenává nový směr vývoje anglosaských zemí s výrazným vlivem tehdejší francouzské společnosti. Přístup králů k psanému slovu je analyzován na základě dochovaných literárních a ikonografických důkazů, z nichž značnou část tvoří dokumenty napsané či objednané samotnými králi; ikonografie je zastoupena portréty panovníků, které se nyní nacházejí v dochovaných rukopisech.

Tato práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních kapitol. První kapitolu tvoří historické pozadí, ve kterém se zabýváme především nástinem vývoje hlavních konceptů této práce: literární aktivita v rámci středověku, středověký vývoj chápání královského majestátu, a postup šíření křesťanství v anglosaských zemích. Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na analýzu dochovaných textů; pro tento účel byl vybrán Alfréd Veliký coby iniciátor rozšíření staroangličtiny na poli vzdělanosti a náboženských diskuzí. Třetí kapitola pokračuje ve zkoumání postoje anglosaských panovníků k psanému slovu a svá tvrzení zakládá na analýze královských portrétů a také rukopisů, v nichž se tyto obrazy nacházejí. Tato část se týká období od 10. do 11. století a zaměřuje se na krále Athelstana, Edgara, Knuta Velikého, a také na královnu Emmu.

2. Historické pozadí

Tvorba literárních a jiných prací založených na znalosti psaného slova se ve sledovaném období značně lišila od chápání této aktivity v 21. století. Tato podkapitola shrnuje nejvýznamnější rozdíly a nabízí stručný přehled charakteristik literární tvorby v anglosaských zemích, přičemž bere v potaz tyto faktory: jazyk používaný pro tvorbu textů, rozsah a rozšíření gramotnosti v tehdejší společnosti, identita autora a požadavky na jeho schopnosti a vědomosti, identita zamýšleného publika, a také běžné důvody a témata pro tvorbu textů.

Středověké pojetí královského majestátu představuje druhý zkoumaný koncept v rámci první kapitoly. Tato podkapitola nabízí stručný přehled vývoje postavy krále v semitském a akkadském období, ze kterého vychází chápání královského majestátu ve většině evropských středověkých zemí. Přehled v rámci pohanského období anglosaských zemí v germánských dobách nabízí určitá vysvětlení týkající se pozdějšího vnímání královské instituce v křesťanské anglosaské společnosti.

Poslední část historického pozadí analyzuje postoje anglosaských panovníků vůči křesťanské víře. Vzhledem k lišícímu se sociálně-historickému vývoji jednotlivých anglosaských zemí, různí vladaři přijímali nové náboženství v různých dobách své vlády a rovněž vykazovali odlišné projevy vlivu rozpínajícího se náboženství v rámci svých vladařských rozhodování. Tyto projevy zahrnovaly například panovníkovo odhodlání šířit víru k co nejvíce pohanům, podporu teologického vzdělání a rozšiřování základních křesťanských textů, anebo čistě osobní přijetí křesťanství jako své osobní víry a přizpůsobení chování k předpokládaným prioritám. Tato rozrůzněnost se projevovala především v raných fázích rozšiřování křesťanství ve stále ještě pohanské anglosaské společnosti. Pozice vladaře v anglosaských zemích může být proto vnímána jako výsledek přirozeného vývoje původně sakrální postavy, která svou podobu přizpůsobila aktuálním podmínkám a potřebám společnosti.

3. Textová analýza

Druhá kapitola této diplomové práce se zaměřuje na analýzu textů, jejichž realizace byla iniciována králem Alfrédem. Tento panovník byl vybrán pro textovou analýzu na základě jeho autorství, aktivního přičinění v reformě vzdělávacího systému a rovněž v programu na obnovu vlivu křesťanství. Texty, které tvoří jádro analýzy v této kapitole, byly vytvořeny přímo panovníkem, případně jejich vytvoření bylo panovníkem zadáno jednomu z učenců. Povětšinou se jedná o staroanglické překlady latinských teologických až filosofických pojednání. V návaznosti na koncepty rozebrané v předchozí kapitole, král Alfréd je názornou ukázkou panovníka vládnoucího v ranně křesťanském období a jeho literární činnost odráží tehdejší politickou situaci. V době jeho nástupu na trůn byly anglosaské země sužovány nájezdy Vikingů, např. v roce 793 n.l. útok na klášter v Lindisfarne. Další velmi silná vlna nájezdů se objevila ke konci 9. století a zapříčinila Alfrédovu aktivitu na poli militantním, když se snažil zrenovovat současný stav anglosaské obranné sítě, přičemž se sám musel po určitou dobu skrývat. Toto období bylo tedy velmi bouřlivé, a jak je doloženo zejména v předmluvě k *Pastýřská péči*, je velmi pravděpodobné, že současný neklidný stav země chápal Alfréd jako boží trest za hříšné chování všech svých poddaných i sebe sama.

Alfrédova reforma vzdělávacího systému nebyla zaměřena pouze na vylepšení současného stavu anglické gramotnosti a na rozšíření staroanglických textů, které měly nahrazovat texty latinské. Těm podle Alfréda rozuměla jen hrstka učenců. Tento vedlejší efekt reformy byl samozřejmě velmi uspokojující a pro budoucí generace výhodný, avšak hlavní účel reformy souvisel s již zmíněným morálním úpadkem a také poklesem vlivu křesťanství ve společnosti. Mladí a svobodní anglosasové se měli nejdříve naučit anglicky, a až později, pokud by měli zájem, měli možnost se doučit latinský jazyk, zejména pokud v budoucnu aspirovali na vstup do

církevního řádu. Znalost angličtiny posléze otevřela dveře k nejrůznějším teologickým textům, zejména ale k překladům Alfréda a jeho pomocníků. Křesťanství tedy hrálo v reformě vzdělávání hlavní roli a psané slovo bylo vnímáno jako zdroj vědomostí, které byly zcela nezbytné pro osobní vývoj ctnostného křesťana. Panovník zde tedy nepůsobil výhradně jako mocenský vladař, nýbrž jako učitel národa, který se pokouší napravit morální standard svých poddaných. Tím si chtěl zajistit boží přízeň, která byla dle jeho názoru anglosasům po dlouhou dobu odepírána.

Latinské spisy, které byly vybrány jako základ nových osnov v právě vznikajících školách, odráží didaktický účel celé reformy. Řehořova *Pastýřská péče* představuje příručku určenou všem duchovním, jejichž křesťanská povinnost zahrnuje přímý kontakt s věřícími. Ti by měli být poučováni o pravých životních hodnotách v rámci víry. Spis byl po dokončení rozeslán všem klášterům v zemi, což mělo vyústit ve zdokonalení didaktické role kněžích coby zástupců Krista na zemi a tedy duchovních vůdců věřících.

Další latinské dílo přeloženo do staroangličtiny byly *Rozhovory duše s Bohem* sv. Augustina. Tento spis řeší osobnější témata než výše zmínená *Pastýřská péče*, která se zabývala všeobecně platnými vlastnosti ideálního duchovního vůdce lidu. Augustinovy *Rozhovory* prozkoumávají hlavní problémy víry, které mohou stihnout jakéhokoli jedince, který se nechá pohltit triviálností života na zemi a zapomene na Boha a na skutečné hodnoty. Tato práce je napsána ve formě dialogu, který umocňuje její didaktický účel. Na rozdíl od původního latinského textu zvolil Alfréd přátelštější přístup ke svým čtenářům a sám se ujal role hříšníka, který otevřeně přiznává své selhání spočívající ve vypuštění Boha ze svého života. Zároveň ale tato postava vyjadřuje upřímnou snahu se Bohu znovu přiblížit, čímž Alfréd nenásilně vyzdvihuje důležitost sebevzdělávání v životě každého křesťana.

Boethius a jeho *Útěcha z filosofie* byla rovněž přeložena Alfrédem v rámci své reformy vzdělání. Znovu zde hraje psané slovo roli prostředníka mezi věřícím jedincem a duchovním vedením, tentokrát se obsah stáčel k pozemskému utrpění a otázce jak s ním naložit a neztratit přitom svou víru a důvěru v Boha. Jako ostatně i předešlé spisy, i tento získal Alfrédovu pozornost hlavně kvůli svému zaměření; bolest a utrpení totiž byla témata, která se silně dotýkala Alfredových osobních zdravotních neduhů a způsobovala mu nemalé psychické obtíže. Východiskem z podobných těžkých chvil se zdála být neochvějná důvěra v Boha a také ve vynahrazení pozemského utrpení v posmrtném životě. Hlavní ponaučení tedy spočívá v upomínce, že pravým vládcem celého světa je Bůh, který je zde prezentován jako čirá láska a dobrota. Trpící člověk je schopen vcítit se do této lásky a nalézt vnitřní pocit uspokojení, ale jen pod podmínkou, že půjde ve šlépějích Boha a nepodlehne hříšným myšlenkám a svodům.

Augustin rovněž poukazuje na užitečnost utrpení projevující se pokornou sebereflexí, a také na jistou zrádnost pocitu sebeuspokojení, který může člověka svést ze správné cesty.

Král Alfréd byl ve své době prezentován jako moudrý vládce a dobrý křesťan, který si zaslouží důvěru svých poddaných. Ti by se neměli bát následovat jeho příkladu a pomoci mu jak v provedení jeho reformy vzdělání, tak v bojích dobra proti zlu v podání války křesťanských anglosasů s pohanskými Vikingy. Alfrédova reforma a jeho přístup k psanému slovu by se daly shrnout několika pojmy, které se opakovaně vyskytují a jsou prodiskutovávány v jeho staroanglických překladech. Tyto koncepty jsou silně spjaty se (sebe)vzděláváním, zejména v souvislosti s učením o křesťanských hodnotách, a také konečným výsledkem, který by vzdělání mělo přinést. Zmíněnými pojmy jsou moudrost a dobrota, které jsou často přímo identifikovány se samotných Bohem, a dále učení a znalosti, které se dají chápat jak v sekulární tak v sakrální rovině.

4. Ikonografická analýza

Třetí kapitola se snaží aplikovat prodiskutované pojmy z úvodní historické kapitoly na pozdější anglosaské krále a porovnává jejich přístup k psanému slovu s přístupem krále Alfréda. Panovníci vybraní pro tuto sekci kralovali v 10. a 11. století a jejich postoj ke knihám je analyzován z hlediska jejich ikonografického zobrazení v dobových portrétech. Podobně jako král Alfréd, také panovníci tohoto pozdějšího období jsou prezentováni jako moudří vládci ve spojení s Bohem a Kristem, kteří mají tudíž neoddiskutovatelné právo duchovně vést své poddané a učit je správnému křesťanskému jednání. Je důležité si uvědomit, že kristologický přístup ke královskému majestátu dosáhl nejvyššího stupně právě v 10. a 11. století, což se projevilo zejména ve vnímání pozemského krále jako zástupce Krista na zemi, čili jako *christi gespelia* nebo *vicarius christi*. Toto přímé spodobnění s Kristem klade na smrtelné vladaře nemalá očekávání, na druhou stranu jim však také uděluje nebývalé pravomoci.

Ve svých portrétech jsou panovníci většinou zobrazováni společně se světci, duchovními otci, nebo přímo s Ježíšem Kristem. Tento typ znázornění umožňuje přímý, byť v realitě nemožný, kontakt pozemských králů s nadpozemskými osobami, což v důsledku navozuje dojem přímého propojení mezi minulostí a přítomností, nebeskou a pozemskou sférou, ale také nebeským a pozemským králem. Nejdůležitější motivací tvorby rukopisů a vložených portrétů byla spása panovníkovy duše, což poněkud kontrastuje s přístupem Alfréda, který se pokoušel o spásu celé anglosaské společnosti (včetně sebe samého). Důkazem budiž Alfrédův záměr použít staroanglické překlady, na kterých společně pracoval se svými pomocníky, jako studijní pomůcky ve všech nově založených školách nebo obdarovaných klášterech. Tento přístup se výrazně liší od

přístupu panovníků 10. a 11. století, kteří sice objednávali tvorbu rukopisů, ale ne za účelem jejich didaktického použití. Pravá podstata těchto rukopisů a v nich vložených portrétů spočívala v jejich hodnotě a jejich význam se často pokládal za podobný významu relikvií, což také vysvětluje uložení některých královských rukopisů v relikviářích obdarovaných klášterů. Pozdější panovníci také často využívali praktické výhody psaného slova, což mohlo vést k posílení jejich královské moci ve vzdálenějších oblastech země, anebo také v případě ohrožení jejich královské autority jinou osobou usílující o trůn.

Král Athelstan může být považován za důstojného následovníka Alfrédova odkazu. Oba panovníci kladli velký důraz na vzdělání a náboženství, a byli přesvědčeni o nutnosti neustálého sebevzdělávání a neochvějné oddanosti Bohu. Přestože Athelstan nedosáhl pověsti vzdělaného učence, jeho sbírka rukopisů a jejich časté darování různým církevním institucím dokazují nemalou náklonost k psanému slovu i výtvarnému umění. Svým vyobrazením se sv. Cuthbertem projevil svou zbožnost a znalost uctívaných patronů ve své zemi, což mu přineslo nejen uznání jeho poddaných, ale i zvýšenou šanci na spásu své duše a dosažení posmrtného života. Intelektuální prostředí královského dvora během Athelstanovy vlády rovněž položilo základ pro počáteční fáze pozdější klášterní reformy zaštítěné králem Edgarem v 2. polovině 10. století.

Ačkoli ani král Edgar nebyl autorem písemných prací v pravém slova smyslu, stále dokázal pokračovat v tradici křesťanských panovníků nastolené např. Alfrédem nebo Athelstanem, kteří podporovali církevní komunity a také tvorbu nových textů. Edgar představoval hlavní postavu v rámci klášterní reformy, jelikož bez podpory jeho královské autority by nebylo možno reformu zrealizovat. Edgar vnímal křesťanství jako jednu z klíčových složek prosperity anglosaských zemí; proto se mu vyloučení hrabivých sekulárních úředníků z církevních komunit muselo zdát jako nezbytná podmínka pro pozdější blahobyt. Edgarovy portréty ho prezentují jako moudrého křesťanského panovníka, kterému je spása přislíbena samotným Ježíšem Kristem, a jehož královská rozhodnutí jsou plně ospraveditelná, jelikož jsou inspirována rozhodnutími krále nejvyššího.

Zejména Alfrédův a Edgarův odkaz je rozpoznatelný i v ikonografických zobrazeních královny Emmy a jejího v pořadí druhého manžela, krále Knuta Velikého. Ačkoli ani Emma ani Knut nepocházeli z anglosaského prostředí, oba si brzy osvolili místní zvyklosti a pokračovali v nastolené tradici anglosaských panovníků. Nicméně, Knut nezapřel svůj vikingský původ a podle všeho považoval mír a bezpečí svých poddaných za hlavní prioritu své vlády, což je podepřeno četnými dopisy a královskými výnosy, které se otázkou bezpečnosti zabývaly. Na rozdíl od Alfréda, který se snažil vytvořit pocit sounáležitosti mezi různými anglosaskými oblastmi, Knutovi zřejmě vyhovovalo vládnout několika rozsáhlým zemím najednou.

Královna Emma plně využívala výhod psaného slova, zejména však jako nástroj k upevnění vlivného postavení vlastní rodiny. Její nejvýraznější literární počin je *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, což je spis chvalořečící vládu krále Knuta po jeho smrti, jehož hlavní účel byl posílit mocenské pozice svých synů a sebe samotné. Její ikonografické zobrazení se nedá považovat za vyloženě oslavující nebo autoritativní, spíše se dá poznamenat, že její vyzobrazená podoba odpovídá prosbě z její knihy, tj. že navozuje vzpomínku na určitý moment z jejího života.

5. Závěr

Diplomová práce se zaměřila na anglosaské panovníky vládnoucí od 9. do 11. století a jejich přístup k psanému slovu jako nástroj vládnutí. Tento postoj se vyvíjel zejména od vlády krále Alfréda, který kladl velký důraz na všeobecnou vzdělanost a gramotnost svých poddaných, což v jeho případě velmi úzce souviselo s propagací křesťanských hodnot skrze překládané didaktické texty. Učenost samotných panovníků se od dob Alfréda snížila, což ale nesnižuje jejich aktivní účast v podpoře křesťanství pomocí tvorby psaných dokumentů, zejména rozsáhlých rukopisů nebo kratších spisů umocňujících autoritu náboženských reforem.

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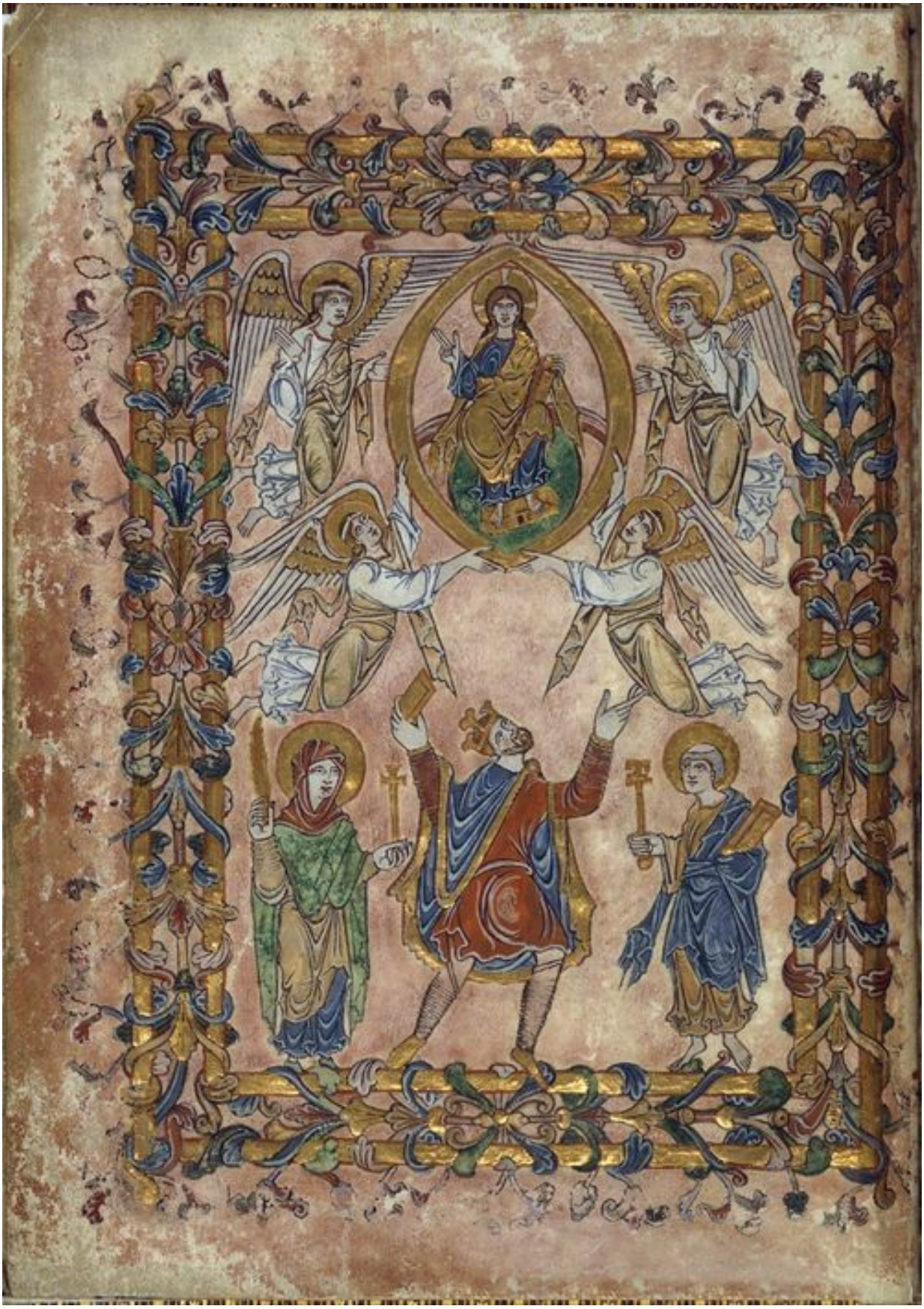

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